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LIVE DANGEROUSLY

Live Dangerously

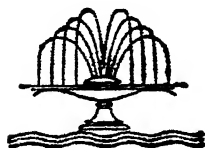
LIVE DANGEROUSLY is, we believe, the most unusual thriller we have ever published. The author, Axel Kielland, is a Norwegian, and the manuscript of his novel came to us by 'plane from Stockholm. The story he tells is not primarily concerned with the murder and sudden death that is the conventional stock-in-trade of the thriller writer. A more exciting, as well as a nobler theme, lies ready to his hand—Norway's unceasing fight for freedom. The shadow of the Gestapo lies across the book. Death lurks on the turn of every page. And yet *Live Dangerously* is both grim and gay. The leading character, who tells a story of intense excitement in the most casually humorous manner, is a rich young play-boy accustomed to spend his time and money rather frivolously in the restaurants and cafes of Oslo. Swept almost involuntarily into the Norwegian underground movement he plays the main part in an adventure which for sheer breathtaking excitement carries the reader on from one tremendous episode to another.

Book Society Recommendation

LIVE DANGEROUSLY

by
AXEL KIELLAND

*Translated from the Swedish text and the original
Norwegian manuscript by Carolyn Hannay*



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1944

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1944

PART ONE

PETTER

I

I HAD BEEN at it half the night and got outside quite a lot of what the black market calls brandy. I wouldn't like to specify what the muck contains, beyond rat poison, but there's nothing wrong with the taste, and the price is terrific, anyway, and the morning after you feel like a water-logged corpse. When I finally tottered home towards the small hours I had a sort of feeling that I was never going to wake up again, but that just suited me, and I threw myself on the bed and became dead to the world.

But it's queer how things pan out. If a stranger suddenly throws up one's bedroom window, sends the blind crashing against the ceilings, and knocks Aunt Emily's china poodle off the window-sill into glorious fragments, a fellow will wake up even if he's a great deal more than half seas over. And I sat up in bed with a jerk and yelled :

"Who's there?"

"Lie still and don't put the light on," said a voice in the dark.

"What the devil?" I said.

"Lie still or I'll shoot," said the voice.

I don't know what you'd have done, but for my part I lay still and let the voice get on with it.

Someone bent over me and whispered so close to my face that the smell of fine old Norwegian blend bid fair to finish me off on the spot :

"Are you a Jössing?"¹

"Here, I say!" I said. "If you've come here to discuss politics, I must say I think you could have chosen a better time."

"There's something in that, maybe," said the unknown, and although I couldn't see him I recognized the type. I knew he was one of those johnnies who stand on the bridge all day and spit thoughtfully into the water, and who make nocturnal expeditions to unknown regions and blow open a safe here and break a jeweller's window there.

¹ Name given to a loyal Norwegian ; opposite of a Quisling.

"There's really a great deal in that," he repeated thoughtfully. "But beggars can't always be choosers, and 'smatter of fact I just had to nip in here just now."

"There's not much to pinch here," I said. (God forgive me for the lie!) "And if you'd put away as much Fine Old Selected Three Star brandy at two hundred crowns the bottle as I have, you'd realize the most tactful thing to do would be to let me die in peace."

"Sorry, laddie," he said, and laughed. "I know how it feels, don't you worry. Wait a bit while I fix this blind."

He disappeared, and believe it or not, I quite lost interest in the man and went peacefully and quietly to sleep and dreamt I was being pursued by a green crocodile in a bowler hat. I may have been asleep two minutes or fifty years for all I know, but then I found someone shaking me, and I gave another jump and said :

"Oh Lord, are you here again ? "

"Sure thing," he said. "Now we can put the light on."

"How jolly," I said, and tried to be sarcastic. "First a nice chat with you, and then Let there be light ! Why, it sounds like the almighty Himself."

"That's right," said the stranger, and found the switch.

Now maybe the booze did something, but the fact is I liked the man.

He stood six foot in his stocking-feet, and he really was in his stocking-feet, too ; he had no shoes, and a gigantic pale toe stuck out through a hole in the bows on the star-board side. The rest of him was in sports clothes, and he looked as if he could have carried a piano up to the fourth floor on his head. His hair was so incredibly red that I thought to myself : You're dreaming, lie down and go on sleeping ! and he gave me one of the most charming smiles I ever saw a rogue produce. His nose was large and strong, and it struck me that a heavyweight must at one time have tried to move it to another place, and he wore one of the Scotchest ties that was ever Made in Germany. The whole impression was super, and I lay there on my back and thought that here we had one of those chaps for whom women go through fire and even water. He had a German Mauser in his right hand, and I said :

"Put that down. I'm quite harmless as long as you keep out of the range of my breath."

"Just as you say," he said with a grin, and shoved the artillery into his bosom, where it disappeared like a needle

in a haystack. "I'm dam' glad I landed on a man this time. Last year, I fetched up with a widow."

"And that wasn't so good?"

"On the contrary. The widow was O.K. But she howled her head off when I had to go again."

"I hardly think you'll run that danger here," I said, and yawned.

"It's a shame to have to disturb you," he said. "Sorry."

"All right, all right," I said. "But why did you ask if I was a Jössing?"

"If you'd been a Quisling, I should have bumped you off, of course," he said.

"Oh yes, yes, of course," I said. "Pardon me, I'm always a bit dense at this time of day. But I *am* a Jössing."

"Active?"

"What do you mean by active? Just now I'm pretty dam' passive."

"D'you do anything useful, I mean?"

"I've never done anything useful in the whole of my life," I said. "And I don't intend to begin now."

"Oh well, that's one way of looking at things, of course."

"You bet it is," I said. "I don't believe in all this messing about people go in for. As long as the Germans and the other crowd leave me alone, they can do what they like, for all it concerns me."

Now it's my nature to get a bit talkative and a bit aggressive when I've had a drop too much, and I felt the brandy beginning to move around inside again, so I woke up and recovered my sense of the realities of life.

"I know I've got a drink in that cupboard," I said. "But I can't remember what I've done with the key."

"Hang the key," said the stranger, and went and opened the cupboard and found the bottle and glasses and other necessities.

"You're a professional, I see," I said.

"You've said it," he replied. "Cheerio!"

"Cheerio!" I said. "It must be a rich life, in its way."

"Not so bad," he said. "So you don't believe in a Home Front and illegal activity, and all that, eh?"

"Damned if I do," I said. "It always seems to me as though people were running round playing a game. They make a fearful fuss about it and no doubt think they're delivering the goods, but it's not a man's work. Give me *your* job of opening cupboards and blowing up safes."

"Hm, maybe," he said thoughtfully. "But just now I'm out playing, too, as you put it."

I don't know if you've ever become sober in one split second, reader. For that's what I did, and it was an awful experience. I dropped my glass.

"What the devil d'you mean? Is someone after you?"

"If you can stir yourself that much, you can take a look out of the window."

I was out of bed like a terrified flash of lightning, switched off the light and peeped out. The street was anything but deserted any longer. Two police cars had already arrived, and a third was just turning the corner. And out ran Gestapo soldiers like peas from a sack, with steel helmets and tommy-guns. They oozed around in a silence that made your flesh creep, and as far as I could see the whole block was so surrounded that not a rat could have got out. It was still dark, so I saw them only as huge unreal shadows. I don't mind admitting I was frightened, and for that very reason I got mad, mad as a hornet.

"Get out," I said. "You've no right to get me into this."

"Right or no right," he said. "You're in the very middle of it, and there you'll stay."

"So that's how things stand, is it?" I said. "But what if I open the window and shout to them?"

"Oh, in that case I'll have to shoot you. But you won't do that."

"Why not?"

"People don't do things like that."

I thought that over, and of course the man was right—people don't do things like that.

"But what in the hell are we going to do?"

"Nothing. Don't let's count our troubles before they're hatched."

"Good God, man, fifty colossal full-fledged troubles in steel helmets are coming up the stairs this very minute."

"I doubt it. In this house alone there are more than a hundred families. And in the whole block there must be more like a thousand. No one knows where I dived in. They don't know where to look."

"What are they here for, then?"

"They'll draw a cordon round the whole block, and to-morrow they'll take it systematically; they know my mug, you see."

"Oh, they do, do they?"

"Christ, yes—I only escaped being caught by the skin of my teeth."

"Were you by any chance thinking of settling down here?"

"Yes, till to-morrow morning."

"But . . . since they know what you look like . . ."

"Perhaps I won't look quite the same to-morrow morning."

He grinned and took out his pipe.

"Oh Lord," I said, remembering my very first impressions from the bedside. "Wouldn't you rather have a cigarette?"

"Don't mind," he said. "And this drink wasn't worse than a lot of other things here."

"Just help yourself."

"Thanks."

"What is it you've been doing to-night, actually?"

"I've blown up the ABA factory."

"The devil you have!"

I remembered we'd heard quite a hefty explosion about midnight while we were sitting carousing. I looked at the fellow, and whether you believe it or not, I liked him better than ever.

I sat and thought that when I'd told my visitor that I'd never done anything useful in my life, there was more truth in it than was really pleasant. You see, the governor had an almost unbelievable facility for collecting goods and chattels round him. He was one of those people who earn a fortune during their after-dinner nap, and everything he stuck his nose into turned to gold. He got pretty unbearable in time, but that's another story. One thing is that I swore black and blue I wasn't going to turn into someone like that, and it struck me it would be a suitable job for me to get rid of a lot of what he'd raked in. And in that capacity I think I can say I've done my best.

And having arrived at the age of thirty, with no kind of regular or irregular work, sitting safe and pretty on a heap of gold that was still pretty respectable with the dividends rolling in merrily each month, and with a bachelor's den on Park Road and a halcyon love life—well, it suddenly struck me that it was quite the wrong way to sit.

"Look here," I said. "I'm glad you came to me to-night."

"Then everything in the garden's lovely," he said.

"Here's mud in your eye."

"I hope you'll get away all right."

"Of course I shall."

"And if I can help you . . ."

"I'm afraid you'll have to."

"May one ask who you are?"

"You can ask if you like, but you won't get an answer. Call me Gingernuts."

"My name's Holt—Iben to friends."

"Then we'll stick to Iben. Names are awkward things to remember and dam' good things to forget, in our branch."

"And I thought you were a burglar," I said, giving a hearty laugh.

"I *am* a burglar. Lord, I had my first stretch when I was nineteen and I know every blessed jail in the country better than my own trouser pockets. There's no denying I'm the pick of the bunch here down east. There's one in Bergen who's pretty good, but I shan't believe it till I've seen him."

I looked at the chap and liked him better and better.

"What about another drink?"

"Ta. Two."

He took the glass with him and went over to the window. I switched the light off. He stood there looking down into the street for a bit, and I thought he must be a pretty cool customer.

"What did I say?" he said. "They aren't doing any more to-night. They know they've got the rat in the trap, and now they're waiting for daylight."

"Perhaps you'd like to try and sleep a bit—I've got a spare room," I said.

"I sleep in the day-time, personally," he said. "Haven't you got another bottle of this booze, Iben?"

"What do you think?" I said, and went to fetch it.

When I came back again, he'd put the light on and was sitting in my best chair. He grinned:

"Excuse me for getting so familiar with you."

"You do me an honour," I said, and meant it. "Chin-chin."

"Cheerio."

"It must be rather a thrill to blow up a factory like that."

"Oh, I can't complain."

"How does one set about it?"

"Elementary. You just take along a knapsack and a suitcase full of gruel——"

"Gruel?"

"Yes. I always call it gruel. Always have. Dunno why. Well, then all you've got to do is to crawl in under the barbed wire while the man on guard's got his back turned, and then

you break open a window into the power-house, put the case at one end of the place and the knapsack at the other, light the fuse, and go home to bed."

"Sounds fairly simple."

"'Course it's simple. Lots of people mess about with electrical junk and all that, but I like the old way best."

"But weren't there any Germans about?"

"Christ, yes, masses of 'em. Eight men outside the fence. But I sneaked in through the north side where it was darkest and the wind blew right through you. The German on guard outside the fence was jumping up and down like a flea with St. Vitus's dance to keep warm, and couldn't hear a thing, his teeth were chattering so hard. I was inside in a jiffy; there ought to have been three men in the yard in front of the power-house, but I didn't see a sign of them. A dog came pattering up, of course, but I've always had a way with dogs, and this one was just as big a softie as a dog should be. He didn't bark or even growl—probably wanted to inspect a bit on his own first. So I gave him a bit of meat with one hand and stuck a knife into him with the other. He was a good old Jössing in his heart of hearts for all I know, but I didn't have time to inquire. It was easy to get the window open—it's just as well you don't know why it was so easy, but the man who fixed the catches is a pal of mine."

"When I pushed the window up a bit I saw a light, and my hair rose an inch or two, but I soon saw that the chaps inside had their hands full minding their own business. Two fat sozzlers were sitting behind the large boilers playing about with a skirt and a bottle of port. The girl was trying to teach them Norwegian, and I'm not going to tell you what they were trying to teach her in return. They were having a great time, by the light of a carbide lamp on the floor. I crept round the boiler and gave one of them a crack on the head with a revolver butt that sent him to sleep at once. That's what happens when you take your helmet off without leave. The girl let out a squeak, and I gave her a kick. The other German was so nice and biddable that I've nothing but good to say about him, and he understood at once that I wanted him to keep his mouth shut."

"He stood there with his hands up and smiled and wagged his tail, and I thought he looked a bit too old for either love or war. I went up to him and said:

"'Take off your helmet!'

"That sunk in, and he took it off. I said:

"'Sorry to have to do this, mister,' and let him have it."

He had false teeth, and they took a little outing on their own. God knows if he's missed 'em yet.

"Well, I put the gruel where I wanted it, and everything was no nicely placed that I reckoned I could get all the machinery in the south end and make a decent breach in the roof as well, so that the whole bag of tricks ought to come down good and hard on the swine's skulls when they began clearing up the mess in the morning. The dame woke up and squeaked once or twice, so I pulled her hair for her a bit.

"'You dirty little bitch,' I said. 'Now you've got the chance to fly to heaven free, gratis, and for nothing, and if I get a single crack out of you you'll be sitting on a pink cloud to-morrow playing long-distance duets with Harpo Marx.' Well, she saw my point at once, and there were no more squeaks.

"Suddenly I heard someone playing about with the door, and I ran and got behind it like lightning. And in comes another solid specimen disguised as a corporal or something like that, who says:

"'Hallo, Fritz, bist du da?' (Hallo, Fritz, are you there?)

"'Jawohl, mein lieber' (Rather, my dear), says I, and sticks my revolver into his guts.

"He was so scared he nearly dropped the bottle he had in his fist, but I rescued it quick, you bet.

"'Vielen Dank, Herr von Sauerkraut' (Many thanks, Mr. Sour Cabbage), I said, and smashed the butt into his face, and this time I gave him all I'd got, for he was a nasty piece of work I wouldn't like to meet down a lonely lane on a dark night.

"Well, now I'd cleared up the mystery of the three who ought really to have been outside in the yard, so I'd only got to do what I'd come for, and clear off. I made a fine long fuse which would last five minutes. Then I took the corporal's coat and helmet, and when I'd got them on, dam' me if I didn't look so dangerous that I quite frightened myself. I drank a good bit of whisky and gave the skirt a stiffish dose.

"'Now, light of my life,' I said. 'Up with you. You're going for a walk with Daddy.'

"'I've got such a belly-ache,' she said, and shed a tear or two.

"'If I'd had a bit more time I can't think of a single place on the whole of your ravishing body that wouldn't have ached,' I said. 'But we may meet another time.'

"Then I looked at my Germans, and believe it or not, I felt I couldn't send them up with the rest. Finally I took

them by the legs one after the other and dragged them outside and laid them in front of the building. Then I lit the fuse and grabbed the girl and made off.

" 'Now, my soul's beloved,' I said. 'You'd better do what Daddy says, otherwise you'll never go to bed with any one but Old Nick himself. Hang on, sweetie, and show us some real love. I know you adore me.'

"She said one or two things you're far too young to hear, but her technique was all right, and she crawled around me most convincingly when we came to the gate.

"The man on guard opened it and had a good laugh, and then he said a thing or two that I imagine were pretty fleshly. I laughed as Germanly as I could while the girl was trying to get into my very mouth, and then we were outside the fence and everything looked O.K. But then the explosion came, and the girl squealed like a stuck pig.

" 'You may well say that,' I said, and pulled her hair for her again. 'And now many thanks for a pleasant night, and may the memory of my burning kisses help you to be a better person.' And then I gave her a kick in the behind, threw off my coat, and legged it as hard as I could go.

"They were after me almost at once, and it was no joke, I can tell you, and I've been playing Santa Claus on the roofs quite a bit, although it isn't Christmas.

"But we're nice and cosy here, and I wouldn't mind another of those cigars."

"Good God!" I said, and looked at him with increased respect. "What a story!"

"Not so dusty," he said. "Specially if you think that I made it up on the spur of the moment."

"You mean to say it's not true?"

He emptied his glass, and looked at me with a grin.

"The first thing to learn in this branch is never to tell anything to any one. The second thing is never to believe anything any one tells you."

Then he laughed as merrily as a schoolboy, and went on:

"I know the ins and outs of this job pretty well, though I say it who shouldn't. But I've never been able to learn those two important things. When I'm well oiled, I can talk my head off. And if you take a little trouble, you can get me to swallow anything."

"That's all right," I said. "You can trust me."

"You can never trust any one."

"Oh, yes, you can," I said. "You can trust *me*. I—I should like to be in on this."

"You *are* in on it, like hell," he said. "If things turn out badly for me to-morrow you'll be in it up to the neck, too."

"It mustn't turn out badly."

"Grand," he said. "That's the spirit. So you'd like to be in on it, eh?"

"Yes—if you can use me in any way."

"Of course we can use you. You're just the type. You look so dam' soft that no one would ever dream of suspecting you."

"Thanks for the compliment."

"Don't mention it. Have you got money, too?"

"Yes. Quite a lot."

"We can use that, anyway. Can you drive a car?"

"What d'you take me for—a paralytic?"

"Ski?"

"Same answer applies again."

"Any objection to killing someone, if necessary?"

"I've never tried. Do your lot often kill people?"

"Oh, no, not very often. We prefer not to. Cheerio! I shouldn't wonder if Petter didn't take you."

"Who's Petter?"

He laughed again, winked contentedly at me through his glass, and said:

"And now let's talk of something else, eh?"

He put his feet up on the table, and I was pleased to see he could wear a pair of my shoes. He was drunk and happy, but there was something in his eye that told me that nothing going on round him escaped him, and I told myself: He knows exactly what you look like inside.

"And if I get arrested——?" I said.

"What about it? You know nothing. Nothing that means anything."

I mulled this over.

"No. That's true."

"But if you *are* pinched," he said. "There's only one thing you need to remember. Deny everything. Deny it till you're blue in the face. Go on denying absolutely everything, whatever they say."

"I'll remember."

"Good boy."

"Your old profession . . . have you given it up entirely?"

"Just about. But now and then, you know . . . one must keep one's hand in."

"Oh, of course. On revient toujours à son premier amour."

"What's that?"

"French."

"I've no objection as long as it isn't German. Cheerio."

"Cheerio."

I felt pleasantly lit up and at peace with the world. I thought it was a fine night. I laid my head back on the pillow and fell asleep.

II

"It's eight o'clock," said Gingernuts.

I opened my eyes and everything came back to me. I lay gazing at the ceiling and my mouth felt full of blotting paper; my temples were pounding, and it struck me with some force that the house was surrounded by the Gestapo and that there wasn't much left to do but to lie down and die.

Gingernuts looked blooming. He had pulled up the blind and a faint grey light began to seep into the room.

"Do you think they're coming here?" I croaked.

"No, no," he said soothingly. "They'd need a whole army to inspect all these flats, and they haven't got that. Not yet. Later on they'll no doubt dribble along if they don't get me in the first round. For the time being they've set a grand trap, and no one will be allowed out until he's given his name and address and family-tree all the way up from the amoeba."

I reflected a bit.

"I suppose you'll have to stay here for the present."

"Thanks for the pressing invitation, laddie," he said, and laughed. "But I've a number of errands in town."

"But you said yourself that no one will be let out. . . ."

"Too true, but in that case there's only one thing to do: We must see that someone comes in."

I thought that one over a bit, and my brain didn't seem to be at the top of its form.

"Who lives next door?" he asked.

"You won't get much help there," I said. "It's Martin, the hotel-proprietor and prominent member of the Hird Old Boys."

He laughed so loudly that I said Hush, and then he rubbed his hands. "Excellent," he said. "Magnificent, no less. Where's the telephone?"

"Are you going to telephone? What if someone's listening in?"

"Let them listen," he said. "Besides, I've been on the

switchboard myself before now, and it isn't as simple as all that. And do you really think that any one's going to bother to have someone sitting there listening to phone calls from a person like you? Think first and talk afterwards, laddie."

He went over to the telephone and dialled a number, and after a short wait, he said :

"Is that Anderson and Co.? This is Mr. Martin, Park Road 76A. Yes, proprietor of the Plaza. There's been an accident here this morning . . . the water-pipes have burst . . . terrible, I tell you . . . the whole floor is under water . . . you must send someone at once . . . yes, quite essential. . . . *No!* not at the Plaza, here in my flat . . . yes, of course, just round the corner, fifth floor. Thanks, that's fine . . . in five minutes? Splendid. Thanks. Good-bye."

He put the receiver down and laughed.

"Now we'll soon have reinforcements."

I went over to the window and looked into the street. People were beginning to come out of the entrance to the large block of flats. Business men, sour from getting up early, off to the office. All who appeared were pounced on by the Gestapo men, and I saw them hauling out their identity cards and having to take off their hats to be carefully measured and inspected. A burly fellow in blue overalls was detained. I knew him very well—he was the caretaker of the flats, and perhaps he was a bit like Gingernuts. He was a good caretaker who kept the heating at a reasonable temperature more zealously than most during the cold half of the year; perhaps a bit choleric as to disposition, but he had a heart of gold. I opened the window and his voice came faintly up from below in clumsy German :

"What the devil——? I've been sleeping all night with my wife . . . what the hell's the sense of bothering respectable people . . . ?"

They pushed him into a car and drove off with him.

"How about a little breakfast?" said Gingernuts.

"I'll see if I can find anything."

"No, it's all right, there's enough," he said, and poured out a stiffish drink.

"I don't like your hair," I said. "It's too red."

"Well, it's there now."

"I've got a bottle of Indian Ink . . ."

He looked at me as though he had to use all his self-control not to give me a clip on the ear. Then he shook his head.

"I suppose you mean well," he said. "But if I can't get past those toads with red hair, I'll die in the gutter. Keep a lookout for our friend the plumber."

I threw on my dressing-gown and took up my post at the window. It was a chilly, grey, misty winter morning. The streets hadn't properly woken up yet; only one or two odd early birds hurried past with their collars turned up to their ears, while they cast furtive glances at the ugly grey line of soldiers round our block. An errand-boy on a bicycle stopped in the hope of a little free entertainment, but one of the soldiers said a word or two to him that made him get on to his bike again and pedal off round the corner as if all the devils in hell were after him.

And then the plumber arrived. I called Gingernuts, and he came across and looked out with his glass in his hand. "Hm," he said. "Might have been better."

He was a little chap with long brown whiskers, and I wouldn't even have been really sure he was a plumber if he hadn't had a long wrench and a bag of tools in his hand. He approached the soldiers cautiously and looked tentatively up at the walls of the houses, as if for help. Then he dithered a bit, and at last he took off his cap and began to talk business with the Feldwebel.

"Just think if they send a man up with him," I said.

"Then there'll be hell to pay both for you and me, and not least for the poor beggar they send up," said Gingernuts. "But it would be unlike them to do it. The Germans are intelligent people, you see. When they expect a chap to come *out*, they're not such fools as to bother about people who go *in*."

My heart leapt with excitement, and I stuck my head out as far as I dared. The plumber was explaining his mission as well as he could, I saw, and waving his identity card about, and at last the Feldwebel took out a pencil and wrote a bit; then he tore off the paper and our plumber took it and went into the house alone.

"It's all right," I said. "He got some kind of pass."

"Splendid," said Gingernuts. "You stay here and wait."

Thereupon he disappeared, and when I followed him I saw he'd gone out into the corridor, leaving the door ajar behind him. I stood still and held my breath. I heard the lift coming up, heard it stop, heard the door being opened. Then there was a faint plop, and the next minute Gingernuts was back again with the plumber under his arm.

He was certainly a pitiable sight. His mouth was open, petrified in an expression of outraged amazement, and he hung like a corpse in Gingernut's arms.

"He's asleep and doing well," said Gingernuts, cool as a cucumber, laying his burden on the sofa. "Now let's have a look."

He swiftly fished out the pass and the identity card from the plumber's pockets; then he gave a satisfied laugh, and playfully pulled the moustache of the sleeper.

"There, there, Tobiassen," he said. "You lie here and go to bye-byes, and you may be sure that this hurt Daddy more than it hurt you, but you must comfort yourself with the thought that it was for King and Country."

"So we see," he went on, "that the chap's called Christian Tobiassen, and is, thank the Lord, only thirty-five. And now I must have a saucepan of boiling water, some gum, and a sharp, thin knife within five seconds."

It was a pleasure to see Gingernuts at work. The way his great fists played about with the identity card was a sight for sore eyes, and soon his own photograph was pasted on to the plumber's card so neatly that only a very sharp and suspicious eye could have detected the forgery.

He took out my oldest coat, and found a pair of disreputable boots at the bottom of the wardrobe, and soon he was all set, wearing Tobiassen's hat and with the wrench and bag in his hand.

"Well, we'll hope for the best," I said. "But I don't like that red hair."

"It'll be all right," said Gingernuts. "And if not, then it'll be all wrong. But you see, the Germans aren't like you and me; they are wonders of order and accuracy. If a plumber goes in, a plumber must come out. And on the pass it says in German and with stamp and all that C. Tobiassen, plumber, identity card No. 708653, went in at 8.34 a.m. No loyal German needs any further proof that the man who comes out at 8.59 a.m. with the same pass and this identity card is C. Tobiassen. Must be. Quite simply can't be any one else, for then someone must have made a mistake, and mistakes are not made in Germany."

"Hm," I said.

"I know them," said Gingernuts. "Thanks for having me last night. I enjoyed it a lot. Hope we'll meet again. Come on, Toby."

"Are you going to take him with you?"

"I'm going up to the attic with him and dump him there,

and then I'll go straight down in the lift the back way out and through the other entrance. So long."

He lifted up the plumber as if he were a child, and was gone.

I sat behind in my empty flat and shivered. All the stuffing had gone out of me. In my mind's eye I saw Gingernuts coming into the street, saw him spotted at once—suddenly drawing his gun and . . . and then I saw him lying in the gutter.

So what? I said to myself. The fellow was nothing to me, after all. It was all his own fault. I didn't even know his name. What had he to do with me? But it was no use. I lay down and tried to sleep. My head felt fit to burst, and I was in a cold sweat. Now, afterwards, I'm a bit proud that I forgot to think of what might have happened to me if they'd got Gingernuts and learnt the truth about everything.

Suddenly the telephone rang. I leapt out of bed and seized the receiver.

"Hallo," said Gingernuts. "Everything was O.K."

"Oh God," I said. "Thank heaven."

"There was just one little thing I happened to think of."

"What was that?"

"Well, you said you had a lot of money."

"That's right."

"If you'd just remember Mr. C. Tobiassen."

"Yes, of course. Trust me."

"Just now he's in clover, and no one will suspect him. But all the same . . ."

"Certainly. I understand. I'll send him something from an unknown admirer."

"And then . . . there was just one other little detail."

"Well?"

Gingernuts suddenly found it a little difficult to express himself. He had several shots at it, and at last it came:

"Well, look, you said you had a lot of dough."

"Yes?"

"Well, it's only that . . . that you haven't quite as much now as you had before, if you get me. . . ."

I thought a bit. But I didn't get him at all.

"What in the hell are you driving at?"

"Well, you see . . . I borrowed a trifle last night. That was at an early stage of our acquaintance, before we'd got to be such good friends."

"Oho."

"Three . . . no, five of those red notes. Is that O.K.?"

"Well, what do you think yourself?"

"Don't ask me. I'm a prejudiced party, as it were."

I laughed.

"You devil," I said. "It's O.K."

"Fine," he said. "Take care of yourself. I think you'll be hearing from Petter."

III

I STOOD there with the receiver in my hand and laughed. Then I discovered I was cold; and I hung up the receiver and began to dress. Ten o'clock came, and with it Christina; she comes every day and does for me; she's been at it five years now, ever since the old man died.

"What are those Germans up to outside?" she asked.

"Don't ask me, Christina," I said. "Perhaps it's some kind of invasion practice."

"They're proper swine," said Christina, and brought me my coffee.

"Now, now," I said. "After all, the Lord made them, too."

"Don't you believe it," said Christina. "Why, He wouldn't touch them with the end of a barge-pole. I know where they come from!"

My heart was thumping a bit faster than usual when I took the lift down, and I had to stop a second and recover before I pushed open the street door and went out.

"Halt! Name?"

The interrogation was short and correct. No, I haven't heard anything out of the ordinary. Yes, certainly I lived here, had done so for the last three years. Yes, I had been at home last night. No, not the whole night, but from two o'clock onwards. No, I had not heard or seen anything at 3.35 a.m. On the roof? No, whatever should I be doing on the roof? (Danke, we're asking the questions here!) Oh, of course, I beg your pardon, but I really had not heard anything.

They looked at me and took off my hat; experts scrutinised me from all sides, but I evidently wasn't what the doctor had ordered:

I can't deny that I didn't get some kick out of it. It was clear they suspected me from habit, and their habits aren't my business. What they saw was an almost too exquisite young man in an irreproachable winter overcoat and Stetson hat, with fair hair and a nose that had little in common with

the one they were trailing. The very opposite, in brief, of a bold bad saboteur who spends his nights blowing up factories and stealing whisky from unconscious German corporals.

"Weiter gehen!" (Proceed!)

The Feldwebel looked at me as though I were something that had crawled out from under a flat stone purely and simply to annoy him, and I had a good mind to beg his pardon very politely for having stood there and taken up his time with idle prattle. But I held my tongue and walked on, and I whistled a passage from *Bohème* as I walked. Life seemed to have got a bit more exciting since last night.

I turned the corner and went along Drammen Road. It was twelve o'clock. I felt in my bones that a long, thoughtful walk would do me good, and then perhaps a drink at The Palms and as eatable a dinner as can be got nowadays for kind words and better payment.

But I had hardly taken a couple of steps before I felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned round quickly and found myself looking into the face of a complete stranger. There was nothing unusual about him, and he was quite conventionally dressed in a grey coat and grey hat, but there was a gleam in his eye that I didn't take to.

"You're coming with me," he said.

"Here, who are you ordering about?" I said.

"You'd better come quietly," he said.

"Who in the devil are you, then?"

• He opened his hand a second and showed me a silver badge.
"State Police."

I was scared. Scared stiff. My stomach seemed to contract on me, and something or other stuck in my throat so I had to gasp for breath. I remember I had only one thought just then: Scylla and Charybdis—the frying-pan and the fire—Scylla and Charybdis—frying pan and fire . . . I could't speak.

"We'll take this," said the man, and a taxi, a perfectly ordinary taxicab, pulled up alongside us. "Get in."

He wasn't brutal—he was friendly rather than anything else, and for some reason or other this scared me even more. I didn't say anything—couldn't, in point of fact; if I'd said a word he'd have seen at once what a funk I was in. He didn't say anything, either, and the car headed straight for the centre of the town. I sat there thinking all the time: These cunning devils! These cunning devils!

Silence isn't always golden; it can be jolly leaden at times. During that short car ride thousands of thoughts raced

through my head, all of them heavy with foreboding, and all more important than anything I had ever thought before in my life.

Arrested. How are you going to get out of this? Better admit everything. . . . Better say that he forced you . . . that he threatened you with a revolver . . . that you'd have been a dead man if . . . that he stole your money . . . describe him . . . help the police . . . show that you haven't for a moment . . .

"I'm glad you came here to-night . . . you can trust me. . . . I'd like to be in on this . . . have never done anything useful . . . you can trust me"

We were in the middle of the town now, and I knew the street well. Grey and dreary like everything else nowadays, characterised by a kind of life—a weary business life with nothing to put in the windows, and a traffic of grey military cars with Wehrmacht numbers. Oslo. My old, ravaged, despoiled, occupied Oslo!

Suddenly something seemed to give way inside me, and all the thousand thoughts crept away and put their heads under their wings. Only one remained. You can trust me, you can trust me, you can trust me. It began to ring in my ears like a song, and all at once I discovered I was sitting there smiling, and that I was on the point of singing out loud: You can trust me!

The car stopped. My companion jumped out and held open the door.

"Get out!"

I got out. I wasn't frightened now. I felt confident and cool. And I thought: It'll be all right. And if not, it'll be all wrong.

"You go first," he said.

We went into an ordinary office building, and took the lift to the fourth floor. Then we stopped outside a door without a name on it.

"What the hell's this place?" I said.

"Sixth District Civil Office," he said. "Though it's none of your business."

His voice was sharp and unpleasant now, and I thought: Steady. Not too bold. The man's dangerous.

He pushed me in and locked the door behind us. I didn't like that. Then he chucked his coat and hat on to a chair and sat down at the desk.

"You may just as well put your cards on the table," he said.

"What cards?" I said.

"We know he was at your place last night."

"Who?"

"The saboteur. The one who blew up the ABA factory."

"Has someone blown up the ABA factory?"

"Oh, so you didn't know that, eh? Perhaps you didn't even know there was such a factory?"

"Oh Lord, yes. I've got shares in it."

He pierced me through and through with his eyes, and the whole world seemed just then to consist of nothing else. Grey, icy-cold, strong. His face looked as if it had been carved from a block of wood; it was gaunt and hard and smooth, with a chin like the bows of a destroyer. I thought: Suppose he knows everything. Suppose they've got Ginger-nuts.

"Don't try and put anything over," he said. "Your only chance is to make a clean breast of it."

"May I sit down?" I said.

"No. Now then. We know that he climbed in through your window at 3-35 a.m., and we know that he left the house at nine, disguised as a plumber."

"Who?"

"Stop fooling."

"Just as you say."

"Take care," he said. "Remember there's a penalty of death for helping people of that kind."

"What kind?"

He took out a revolver and levelled it at me, with his elbow propped on the table. He was quite calm and didn't sound at all angry.

"If you don't speak up, and look sharp about it, you'll be one of those cases who are 'shot while attempting to escape.'"

I felt scared again, but not in the same way as before. It was the first time I'd been on the wrong side of a revolver, and it was more unpleasant than you'd think. But all the same I thought: It's obvious he won't shoot. Why should he? People don't do things like that.

"I haven't dreamt of attempting to escape in any way," I said.

He smiled, but it wasn't a pleasant smile.

"Excuses are also a kind of escape."

"Excuses?" I said. "What are you getting at, man? There you sit, bleating about a saboteur and a factory. I can't make head or tail of it all."

"Can't you? Then think again," he said. "Not afraid, by any chance?"

"Of course I'm afraid, you bloody fool. If you'd lend me that cannon a minute, I think I could make you afraid, too."

He didn't say anything for a long time, but just glared at me. The revolver was steady as a rock in his hand, and pointed straight at me. It wasn't exactly fun. Then he began to speak, very slowly.

"You may not believe it, but I'm trying to help you. We know that he got out of your flat, and that you denied any knowledge of this when questioned by the Germans. We know that he had money on him which came from you, and that he was wearing a pair of your boots and a coat which was once made for you. . . ."

He stopped for a moment, and put down the revolver to light a cigarette. I thought: How the hell can they know all this?

"We want to be just," he said. "We Norwegians who have gone in for the new order have no wish to see our countrymen shot. As long as we are allowed to investigate a case, we seek for the truth."

"Yes, you certainly do seek!" I said.

"Shut up and listen. If I now go up and deliver you over to the Germans, you'll be shot immediately."

I didn't say anything to that. It sounded plausible.

"But I can't quite get this to fit. It doesn't seem natural for a chap like you to be associated with a burglar and a saboteur who blows up factories."

"Fine," I said. "Now you're talking sense at last."

He looked at me again, long and searchingly, and then he took up the revolver and tossed it about in his hand.

"And the man himself says you didn't help him. That the whole thing was pure chance. That he forced you to hold your tongue, and that he stole your money."

I thought: They've got Gingernuts. It's all over.

"Is that the truth?" he asked.

Chuck everything, I thought, it's all up—might as well get it over and done with. I opened my mouth to go ahead, and suddenly remembered some words: Deny everything. Deny it till you're blue in the face. Deny it, whatever they say.

"I still haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about," I said.

He raised the revolver.

"Now I'm going to count up to five, and then I shall shoot.

If you haven't had the sense to get a whole lot of ideas in the meantime, that is to say."

Scared isn't the word. I was a sick man. Wanted to spew. Felt how the cold sweat broke out all over me, how my stomach contracted. I thought: You're sunk, my boy.

"One," he said. "How you *do* sweat!"

I lost my temper, and it helped.

"Count, blast and damn you, and get it over!" I shrieked.

"Two," he said. "You're being rather stupid, you know."

"Count!" I shrieked. "*Count!*"

"Three. Be sensible and tell me what you know."

"I can't think what you're babbling about, you bloody swine."

"Four. Next time we're off."

I shut my eyes. I couldn't bear the sight of the revolver any longer. I thought: I wonder if one hears the bang.

"I've changed my mind," said the man.

I looked up. He had put the revolver down on the table and was sitting with his thumbs stuck in his armholes, swinging on his chair. Now you might jump on him and take a chance, I thought. But I hadn't the strength. I was exhausted and all the stuffing was out of me, and I felt like a wet rag.

"You can go," he said.

Steady now, I thought. That's a lie. Look out, he's bluffing.

I stood quite still and stared at him, and my mind was working at high pressure. He laughed, and his eyes looked quite different. I couldn't quite make out whether he was laughing at me or trying to appear friendly.

"I'm glad you believe me at last," I said.

"Get out," was all he said.

I won't say I understood very much, but I wasn't scared any longer; I felt rather tired but quite calm, and pretended to be angry:

"You aren't going to explain the meaning of this amazing interrogation?"

"No," he said. "Now get out and look lively about it."

I looked at him hard and thought: I'll remember that face, and maybe the day will come when I can alter one or two features on it. Then I unlocked the door and went out without looking round. I felt he was sitting there, and laughing at me.

When I got to the stairs I was ready to fall. For a moment the whole horror welled over me again, and I clung on to the bannister and dragged myself slowly down to the third floor. There was a box there, and I was violently sick into it. After that I was perfectly all right again, and felt how much I wanted a drink and a cigarette.

IV

I CAN'T DENY that it looks a bit comic when Oslo gathers to have the day's drink. If you come two minutes after three, you've no hope at all, and you may just as well go home again, thirstier than when you left it. Most of the so-called *beau monde* stream in as early as two, and sit there like dry plants waiting for rain, and when the hands of the clock slowly approach zero hour at last The Palms is as full as on a national holiday in the happy old days.

It certainly is comic, and I've heard quite sensible people say that in times like ours human beings ought to have better and more useful things to do than to line up for a bad cocktail. But there's no getting away from the fact that, for many people, this hour at the bar is the only bright spot in a long grey day. The clouds seem to lift a bit at the bar; over our drinks we forget the hell outside; there are no Germans here, and we can exchange the latest stories about them, and we may even forget ourselves so much as to have quite a hearty laugh now and then.

I ambled in about half-past two, and every one who saw me must have realized I needed a drink. It isn't every day I have something to think about—to be quite honest, I've never really used my head for much else than a hatrack, but to-day it was going round so fast that I was fit to blow up.

What did it all mean? The morning's interrogation hung over me like a nightmare. Why had they let me go? Or *had* they?

I bought a paper and hid myself behind it, while I tried to get my thoughts into some kind of order. Of course they hadn't let me go. Doubtless someone was shadowing me; perhaps he was sitting here at this very moment, looking at me and hoping—for what?

Oh well, let them shadow me. A fat lot of use it would be. What did I know? I had been in on things for one single night, and now it was all over. Gingersnuts had been pinched. For me life would go on as before.

As before? I thought about that a bit—about my usual mode of life. Up at eleven. Breakfast—bacon and eggs and real coffee. Then into the town to buy more eggs and bacon and coffee and whisky and smokes in the black market. A drink. Another drink. Dinner. And then a whole series of drinks, and then a few girls, and then . . .

I put the paper down and thought: To hell with it all. That wasn't the way to do things—it wasn't right, and besides, it wasn't any fun. I saw myself in the mirror over the bar, big and strong and done to a turn by artificial sunlight, but flabby in the muscle and empty in the head. And round me there raged a drama of life and death thrilling as a film. People blew up factories and came in with plumbers under their arms—people *lived*, lived as never before, while I sat here torpid and useless on a stool at The Palms, waiting for a Dry Martini.

"Hallo!"

Jacob had climbed up on to the stool beside me. He looks like a little fox, does Jacob, always ready to dart off and disappear, always alert and familiar, with eyes that are everywhere at once.

"D'you want a lot of whisky? Twenty bottles?"

"O.K. How much?"

"Three thousand. You can have them to-morrow."

"Fine. Can you get me any cigarettes?"

"Can I hell? How many?"

"Say two thousand. 'Frisco.'"

"Fine. Get them to-morrow. Hi, Ola, hurry up with the bottles. It's three o'clock!"

There was a stir like at a racecourse just before the start. The whole of The Palms was full to bursting, and people jostled round the bar as though their lives depended on their getting one of the glasses ranged on the counter. The bartender stood ready with his eye on the clock—and then it struck.

"They're off," said Jacob, and snatched a glass.

I felt tired, and the hand that held the glass trembled a little. We sat there on our stools between packed walls of human beings, and the talk rose like a confused buzz, a mush of sounds in which the separate words completely disappeared and nothing meant anything.

"Cheerio, Jacob," I said.

"Cheerio," he said. "Say what you like, life takes some beating."

I looked at him, and it struck me that I didn't like him.

Suddenly I felt that everything was repellent and rather footling, the women laughed too shrilly, and had far too many teeth in far too scarlet mouths.

"Ola," I said. "I'm not well to-day."

"To-day again?" said Ola.

I pushed over a ten-crown note, and got another glass. It helped a bit. I thought: Oh well, I'm not the only one. Look at all the others here—every one can't go blowing up factories.

"Can you get me a ham, Jacob?"

"A ham? Sure. You can have it to-morrow."

At the same moment I heard a voice just beside me saying:

"There used to be a good cocktail here once. It was called something like 'Gingernuts.'"

I looked up. She had climbed on to the stool beside me and was leaning over the bar talking to Ola. Our eyes met in the glass and she smiled.

"You mean 'Ginger devil,' miss," said Ola. "Yes, it wasn't bad."

"Strong," she said. "Appallingly strong. It nearly blew your inside out."

She was pretty. Not enough to make a man catch his breath, but pretty, absolutely. The eyes over in the mirror were clear and grey, and they were laughing. She was fair, and her hat looked like a hat. About twenty-five though of course you never can tell. I couldn't remember ever having seen her before.

"It's a long time since we've been able to mix a Ginger devil, miss," said Ola, with a sigh. "Now there are only Dry Martinis."

"Yes, mine has become quite dry," she said, and twiddled her glass between her fingers. "Can I have another?"

"Only one to each customer, miss," said Ola.

"Oh, you can squeeze out another one, Ola, I think," I said.

He looked at me and winked. He was affability itself, but then you mustn't forget that I've spent so much money in his bar as time has gone on that his wife can go out and play him false of an evening in real ermine. He fished up a new glass from under the bar, and the girl beside me lifted it and drank to me.

"A thousand thanks," she said. "You really have rescued my life."

"Well, that's nice," I said. "Though for that matter I think you'd have managed on your own all right. Ola is not altogether impervious to feminine charm."

"Do you think so?"

"I don't think, I know. And, as a matter of fact, you look as though you usually got what you wanted."

"That's what Daddy always used to say. 'You'll get what you ask for, Petter—and if not, then you'll steal it.'"

"Petter?"

"Every one calls me Petter," she said.

I looked at her. She smiled at me, but there was a little gleam in her eye that told me this might be something more than merely idle chat at a bar.

"It's a pity you'll never be able to taste that 'Gingernuts' again as you call it," I said slowly.

"Never? Surely you're being a bit too pessimistic?" she said.

"It's a poor lookout," I said. "As far as I can gather, our guests have got hold of all the ingredients."

She took out a cigarette and I lit it for her. She smiled and blew a little smoke in my face.

"Thank you. I think you're mistaken," she said. "I believe my Gingernuts will come back all right."

I looked round the place and didn't feel quite easy. What we were saying sounded idiotic enough and quite innocent, but I knew that somewhere there was a long-eared son of hell who might perhaps be able to put two and two together and make a great deal more than four. People, were packed like sardines. I was pretty sure that this was serious and that her words had a lot more behind them than appeared on the surface.

"I can remember the recipe of that cocktail, as a matter of fact," I said.

"No? Can I have it?"

"With pleasure."

I tore off the back of an empty cigarette packet and wrote: *I'm being shadowed. Vamoose.*

And I thought: God almighty, how stupid it sounds.

"Let's see," said Jacob, on the other side.

"Run away and play," I said. "If you drank this you'd go up in smoke."

She looked thoughtfully at the piece of cardboard and put it into her bag.

"Thanks," she said. "It sounds marvellous."

"Marvellous—and dangerous."

"No, not in the least dangerous. What I'd like would be another drink."

"Do you think it's sensible?"

“ Absolutely.”

She smiled at me again, and I saw that she was incredibly sweeter than I'd thought to start with.

You know, there are two kinds of women—the sort that takes a man's breath away the first time he sees her, and the one who reacts on one pretty normally to start with, but who at second or third glance already seems to be so much *the* girl that one finally begins to play about with thoughts of marriage.

The first type is dangerous, of course, specially when taken with alcohol, but at the same time she's more what I'd like to call acute. When you meet her in the street next day, all you think is: Good Lord, was that all? and then you're already well on the road to recovery.

The other type may easily become chronic, so we ought to be glad she's not so common. I've seen examples of how that type have got strong men and hardened old bachelors to go and look at furniture and fittings in all the big streets, absent-mindedly whistling the Wedding March the while.

This Petter looked as though she were very definitely Type B. Every time I looked at her she'd opened up new possibilities. We all know Nature often rations her gifts a bit—I mean, if she's doled out a pair of perfect legs, there'll be some flaw or other on the top part, and when she's spread herself on a first-class mouth, the teeth inside may very well be skew-whiff. But when this Petter was put together the Controller must have been asleep, for she'd managed to take out practically everything you could desire, and even so she didn't at all give the effect of exaggeration.

There are women—there weren't so few of them at The Palms just then—who go through life like museum pieces with the world's best bust and hips and—but perhaps we'd better stop there. And if there's a single man who doesn't undress them with his eyes when they go through the bar, they first get thoroughly indignant and then spread the most scurrilous rumours in the town about the state of the fellow's hormones.

This Petter wasn't a bit like that. She sat there quite simply tip-top in every respect, and didn't look as if she thought there was anything remarkable in it. I've always been an ass at describing things, and specially that kind of thing, so I shall just have to say she looked exactly as a woman ought to look, and leave it at that.

“ Give me another two, Ola,” I said, or rather I whispered.

“ And one for me, too,” said Jacob.

"You run along and get hold of that ham," I said.

"I can do that to-morrow," said Jacob.

"Do it to-day," I said. "Otherwise there are going to be ructions."

"Oho, is that the size of it?"

"Just exactly."

He looked at me and winked in a sick-making way, and then he grinned and looked so fantastically like a fox that every right-minded hunter would have been after him on the spot if he'd happened on him in the forest. I felt like hitting him, and thought: Good God, what the hell sort of friends *have* you got?

"Righto, Iben," said Jacob, and got up with exaggerated nonchalance. "Good luck, and go on and win. And you too, miss."

And with that he left me to pay the bill, as usual, and disappeared into chaos.

I looked at Petter, and she smiled.

"He has an unusually expressive face, your friend," she said.

"He has, hasn't he?" I said. "Someone ought to remodel it pretty thoroughly some time."

"I've never seen any one who by his mere expression assumed so distinctly that we were going to bed together."

I don't know why it was, I'm sure, but I did not say what I should undoubtedly have said to any other girl in a similar situation. I should then have said: There's nothing to stop us as far as I'm concerned. Or: Wouldn't that be quite an idea? Or: Isn't it rather a pity to disappoint him? Something like that, for that's the accepted jargon.

Instead I said nothing and did something I haven't done since the Fifth Form: I blushed. And then Ola brought the drinks, and a fat stockbroker with red side-whiskers got furious and said:

"It looks to me as though some people get two and even three drinks here."

"You are mistaken, sir," said Ola.

"Mistaken, am I?" said the stockbroker. "Are you being insolent?"

Ola looked at him as if he were something the cat had brought in, and put the glasses down in front of us with sublime calm.

"Answer, man!" said the fat chap. "I'm not going to be treated just as you choose!"

"If you make a disturbance here you'll be refused service in future," said Ola.

The fat chap collapsed like a pricked balloon. He opened his mouth once or twice, but thought better of it and shut it again and retired from the field of battle.

There are many wielders of power in dear old Norway now-a-days, but no dictatorship is a patch on that of the barkeepers and the tobacconists.

"Don't bother about Jacob," I said to Petter. "He's always been a bit plebeian."

"Or perhaps he knows you very well," she said, and laughed gaily.

I didn't say anything to that, but stuck my nose in my glass to consider the point. Yes, there was something in it; things had got so far that chaps like Jacob *did* know me a bit too well.

"You see," I said, "you must know that when a chap's a bachelor and has quite a lot of money and doesn't exactly spend his evenings sitting at home reading the Bible, he's bound to get a certain kind of reputation, in time."

"I've heard people say so," she answered, and was very serious outwardly, but obviously bubbling with laughter inside.

"But that doesn't necessarily mean one is to believe all one hears."

"Oh?"

"It naturally depends on *what* one hears."

"Yes. Yes, of course."

Then she didn't say anything for a while, just sat and sipped her drink.

"Well, what have *you* heard, for example?" I said.

"That you are a man with two very strong interests in life."

Well, it might have been worse. There are some people who might have denied me any interests in life at all.

"Those interests being?"

She pointed at her glass.

"That's one."

This wasn't quite so good. I got red and a bit annoyed.

"And the other?"

"Need I say?"

I looked sharply at her for a moment; she gave me a most winning smile, and I saw that her eyes could be blue, too—that she was perhaps the type who, when they are serious, have grey eyes, which get brighter and bluer the more they're enjoying themselves.

"That's a dam' exaggeration," I said. "A sordid libel. I'm no worse than other people, and I assure you . . ."

"Don't get so excited," she said, with a smile. "It's no concern of mine, after all."

I checked myself. Of course, that was the truest thing she'd said yet: It was no concern of hers, and if it had been any other girl, I might very well have enlightened her with some acerbity on this point: Mind your own business, my lady, I would have said. You who sit in bars and show twelve inches too much leg and get into talk with perfectly strange men you don't even know the name of!

Instead I said:

"I honestly wish it *was* some concern of yours."

And when I'd said that, I felt something rather funny. It's a bit difficult to explain, for it was so new to me. I had suddenly grown fearfully serious, and thought: You *mean* this.

Otherwise one never means anything one says to a girl. It's all part of the programme, a kind of ritual one follows to get quick results. This was rather different, somehow.

"I don't think you'd like it much," she said.

"How do you mean?"

"If I—let it be a concern of mine."

"What might happen, d'you think?"

"Well, I might take you on and lick you into shape a bit."

"Go ahead, the sooner the better."

"Get you *another* interest in life, perhaps."

"Suits me."

"It might perhaps mean danger for you."

It suddenly struck me that a whole lot had slipped my memory during these minutes. Not only the bar with all the people and the babble and the buzz and the thick atmosphere of smoke and spirits and perfume—but Ginger-nuts and the interrogation in the morning and the shadow, who was probably sitting with his ears cocked hard by.

"Excuse me," I said in a low voice. "As a matter of fact I'd clean forgotten all that. I was thinking of something quite different."

She laughed, and drained the last drops in her glass.

"Still about—*that*?"

I laughed too.

"Yes, in a way, but differently, all the same."

"Oh, well," she said. "I can't expect to uproot a firmly fixed habit in five minutes."

"Must it be rooted up—altogether?"

She looked at me, and her eyes were amazingly blue now. If it didn't sound so idiotic I'd say that those eyes were laughing fit to burst.

"Not on my account," she said.

People had begun to go, the bar was full of empty glasses, and Ola pattered sadly round among the tables looking for cigarette ends in the ash-trays. He never found any. Even millionaires take their stubs home now-a-days, and smoke them in hours of need in their pipes.

"Ola," I said. "We're celebrating something to-day. Something or other, we don't quite know what ourselves."

"It's no use," he said. "There isn't any more. Cross my heart. But they've got quite a big ration in the dining-room to-day, I heard."

"That sounds good."

"Yes, but don't leave it too late."

I looked at Petter, and she winked gaily.

"I think it sounds good, too," she said.

I had a second thought and frowned, and she laughed:

"But perhaps you hadn't thought of asking me to dinner?"

"Like hell I had," I said. "There's nothing I'd like better. But"—I leaned across to her and whispered—"it can't be done. Someone's after me. It's dangerous."

"No, no," she said. "Not in the slightest."

"I know better."

"Possibly," she said. "But *if* I am to take you on, the first thing you've got to learn is that Petter always knows best. Come on, now."

And with that she slipped down from the stool and went in front of me up the three steps to the Mirror Hall.

She was as gorgeous as an army with banners in her fur coat, and she walked as naturally as though she had no idea of what I thought of the sight.

Ola gave me a long look which said a great deal, and then he winked meaningly with his left eye. I felt a great desire to sock him one, but couldn't help seeing his point, all the same.

V

THERE WAS practically no one in the Mirror Hall, and I took a good table by the wall with six empty tables round it. People have lost their appetites now-a-days. What food and drink that's left in old Norway vanishes so quickly that the whole thing feels like a blitz, and the faces of the towns change from day to day. Only three weeks ago it would have been impossible to get a place in here for all the gold of Indies; there was still a bit of everything left, then, and

a chap with money could stuff as many oysters or lobsters as he liked, and help the lot down with quite decent aqua vita, a couple of amazingly good liqueurs, a whisky or two, and of course champagne ad lib.

It's queer when everything really has come to an end in earnest. We had obviously had quite a bit lying about round the country; for a long time things could be managed somehow—things weren't at all bad, and to tell the truth we had more than enough both to eat and drink day after day. Our guests ate and drank and ordered and confiscated till their eyes bid fair to pop out of their heads, but all the same there always seemed to be a little left in the bottom of the widow's cruse.

But not now. This was the end. We'd got to the bottom.

The old Mirror Hall bore it with dignity. The tables stood in long rows with lustrous white cloths and glass and silver and flowers, waiting for better times, the waiters stood ready as usual at the entrance of the Marble Hall, with their napkins over their arms, and Telle—that Grand Old Man of the waiting profession—walked with his customary dignity through the place, au fait with everything—even this.

On the platform the dear old trio were playing their dear old melodies unmoved, and the fat 'cellist sat as usual with his arm tenderly round his instrument and drew the bow backwards and forwards, while he stared dreamily up at the candelabra and thought of steak and onions.

It all seemed nothing but a passing phase. Suddenly, in a moment, life might break loose again in here—human beings, laughter, beautiful women, jewels, popping corks, trays laden with food

The time will come.

But just now the mirror walls reflected the endless emptiness, and made it twice as great. And as if to emphasise that emptiness and explain it, two S.S. officers in the uniforms of the Death's Head Hussars were sitting straight as ramrods in the middle of the room, eating their dinner. They weren't talking, and their faces were completely blank. Both were adorned with fencing scars, just as they should be, and neither of them had any back to his head.

I sat and waited for Petter, and looked round me while I smoked a cigarette. I know perfectly well that the Mirror Hall is not remarkable in any way; to the pair with the death's heads it was only an old-fashioned restaurant of medium size in a little capital. But for me it was full of memories of brilliant parties, of taste and charm, wit and beauty, exquisite suppers. . . .

"Good-evening," said Telle softly beside me. "To-day we have fried herrings."

"And——?" I said.

"There's no 'and.' Fried herrings. Nothing else. At five-fifty."

"The prices keep their high standard anyway, what?"

"They do. We can't complain. The portions are unfortunately very small to-day."

"I believe you. We'll have four."

"Very good."

"And what shall we drink with the herrings?"

"Champagne."

"Or else . . . ?"

"There's nothing else. Only champagne."

"German."

"Naturally. Ninety-five crowns a bottle, plus tax."

I looked at him and sighed. He smiled and made a hopeless gesture with his hands.

"You may well say that," I said.

"I didn't say anything."

"No, but you thought the more, eh?"

He laughed.

"If you'll keep it strictly to yourself, I did."

I knew Petter had come in before I saw her. That's a bad sign. If it ever happens to you that you can feel when a girl has come into the room, then there are breakers ahead.

She was almost a bit of a shock. A fur coat can be worth as many thousands as you like, but it's still a pretty unnatural garment for a woman. Even the most beautiful look like a sort of parcel on legs in one. Petter without one was certainly easy on the eye. Simple and chic and slim-waisted, with long lithe legs. Even the two death's heads looked up for a second when she went past them, and even if I wouldn't go so far as to say that their faces grew more human at the sight, it was at any rate clear that something clicked in their minds. So it did in mine as I followed her with my eyes. There goes an intelligent girl, I thought. Kind, too, but not meek and mild by any means. She knows what she wants. The iron hand. . . .

"Rejoice and be glad, Petter," I said. "We're getting herrings and champagne."

"Magnificent!" she said, sitting down. "It's simply grand to be out on the razzle again."

"Good-evening, madam," said Telle. "It's a long time since we had the pleasure of seeing you here. I wish I could serve a really delicious chicken instead of the herrings."

"Serve the herrings à la poulard, and it'll be just as good," she said, smiling.

"You *could*, of course, get hold of a chicken very well, if you wanted to," I said, with a wink.

"Hopeless. Quite impossible. It might cost me my neck. It gets worse and worse every day. They've arrested a hotel-proprietor again this morning."

"Who was that?"

"Martin. And he's thoroughly Nazi—famous for it, indeed."

"Martin?" I said, and I don't mind admitting I was pretty surprised. "Whatever for?"

"We aren't told, of course. But it must be something to do with the black market. What else could it be?"

"Was he arrested *to-day*?"

"Yes. This morning. And the funny thing is that it was the Germans, the Gestapo themselves, who arrested him."

"Ah yes," said Petter. "We're living in strange times."

"That's the truth, madam," said Telle, and faded out.

I offered her a cigarette, and thought the matter over while I lit it for her.

"Look here," I said. "That Martin business is pretty queer, you know."

"Not a scrap," she said. "Naturally they found Tobiassen in the attic."

It may be that I'm not extra quick in the uptake, but I understood less and less of this.

"What do you know about Tobiassen?"

"Everything."

"Yes, but now that Gingernuts has been pinched and . . ."

"Gingernuts hasn't been pinched. Just at the moment he's asleep after a good day's work."

"But what in the name of heaven . . .? When I was interrogated by the State Police this morning . . ."

"You weren't interrogated by the State Police. All you had was a social chat with a friend of mine."

I opened my mouth to say quite a bit, but just then Telle appeared in the vanguard of a considerable procession, consisting of the waiter who poured out champagne, the waiter who served the herrings, and a freckled boy who carried the potatoes round. If one hadn't known better, one might have thought the old days had returned, where the fare really justified this exquisite ceremony. They circled round us with unparalleled elegance in immaculate tails and white

gloves, and really gave us the illusion of sitting at a princely board.

"Cheerio," said Petter, emptying her glass.

"Cheerio," I said. "But now for God's sake tell me what all this means."

"It's really fearfully simple," she said, carrying out a post-mortem on a herring with the hand of a master surgeon. "Gingernuts said that you'd like to be in on this, in your small corner."

"Yes, that's true."

"Well, then, of course we had to find out first if there was anything to be gained from admitting you."

"And—was there?"

"Looks like it. Otto has given a short but expressive report."

"What did he say?"

"He said: Probably a nitwit, but mum as an oyster."

I didn't say anything. She sat looking at me, with a smile. I thought of the interrogation, and felt myself going red. He must have had a good laugh at my expense, blast him.

"You aren't angry, are you?"

I was on the point of leaving no mistake about my being dam' angry. The upset to one's feelings from arrests and interrogations and revolvers and general fiendishness, isn't exactly a pleasure—particularly not the morning after, when a poor devil's got all he can do, anyway, to cope with his hangover, and wants nothing better than to be left in peace.

But just as I was going to let fly and air my indignation, it struck me that the whole thing really was rather funny, and so I began to laugh.

"That's the spirit," said Petter. "I was beginning to be a bit apprehensive. A sense of humour's the first condition for joining our little circle."

"Cheerio," I said. "He did his stuff really rather well. He was the nastiest beggar I've ever bumped into."

"He's a grand fellow; I'm sure you'll be great friends."

"Does that mean I've stood the test and have been elected to membership?"

"We don't take it so seriously. You won't have to sign away your soul to the devil with your own blood, or anything like that. We're just a few good friends who have a good time together."

"I'll bet you do," I said. "I can imagine having one hell of a good time with you."

She put down her fork and looked seriously at me. Searchingly, don't you know?

"It's all right," I said hastily. "Don't misunderstand me. I didn't mean it that way."

"Didn't you?"

"No, not at all. That is . . . Oh, well, there's no getting away from it that you're dam' sweet, and that . . . but it's not that. I like you. You're not the sort I'm used to. I can't understand where you've been all my life."

"Well, after all, you couldn't have time for *everything*," she said. A bit sarcastically.

I sat twirling my glass between my fingers, thinking a bit.

"I'm beginning to see I didn't have time for the most important thing."

She bent her head and ate herrings for a while in silence. Then she looked up and suddenly laid her hand on top of mine on the table. Her eyes were warm and friendly.

"It's not too late yet," she said. "There are lots of important things you can still find time for."

"Thank you," I said, feeling remarkably happy.

"Well, we might just as well stop treating one another as strangers. We'll be seeing quite a lot of one another."

"I hope so," I said. "My name's Iben."

"I know. Iben Holt." She tried the name out.

"Sounds silly, what?"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that. But it must have been a bit difficult to have that name at School. Too like Ivanhoe."

"You bet it was. Every one made the most of it. My old man made it up—he liked combinations. That's the sort of mind he had."

"You didn't like your father?"

"He didn't like me. He hated me. He had a strong suspicion that little Iben wasn't the work of his hands—to put it politely."

"And was he?"

"I hope not."

"Wasn't your father rather one of the pillars of society?"

"Rather! He was one of those people who are useful with a capital U. He earned money, and it may very well be that other people lost it. I swore that I would never be Useful."

She lifted her glass, and I signed to the waiter to bring another bottle.

"There's more than one way of being useful, you know," she said.

"Yes, I know, and I think I'll have a shot at yours," I said.

"That's great," she said. "Cheerio."

I sat there feeling we'd become friends.

"I say."

"Yes?"

"Telle called you Madam. Are you married?"

"Certainly I am."

Yes, yes. Naturally. What else could one expect? Why should I be the first to see she was worth inspecting at closer range?

"Where's your husband, then?"

"He's gone away."

"Gone away? Out travelling somewhere?"

"He's dead. He was killed at Tretten in April, 1940."

I turned round and discussed the new bottle with the waiter. I thought: Dam' hard on her. I thought of how there must be lots of Norwegian girls going round like this, who were widows now and going on with the war that their husbands had lost. And I thought of how I hadn't done anything, and that I'd thought it was comic more than anything else to go out and pot at German tanks with a revolver.

When I looked at her again she was sitting there smiling to herself.

"What are you laughing at?"

"I'm laughing at Martin, the hotel-proprietor," she said. And then I laughed, too.

V I

WE'D GOT practically to the bottom of the new bottle when I said that. I felt remarkably happy. Carefree and gay and ready for anything. It wasn't only the champagne's doing. I've sat here in the Mirror Hall with many women in my time, but none of them had the same effect on me as Petter. Just to be with her was a treat. We'd talked about everything under the sun, and I felt as though I'd known her as long as I could remember. She had everything I'd longed for and looked for—she could be serious and logical like a man, but it didn't take much to make her throw back her head and laugh brightly and merrily. And then her eyes lit up so that I wanted to take her in my arms and squeeze the life out of her.

"I say," I said.

"Yes?"

"I'm in love with you."

"Pretty quick work, isn't it?"

"It was inevitable," I said. "Nothing could be more natural. It's as simple as falling off a roof."

"And I fancy it'll be just as painful."

She'd grown quite serious now, and looked at me as if she felt a bit sorry for me.

"Why should it be?" I said. "Don't we get on well together?"

"Oh, yes—far better than I'd expected."

"Well, there you are. And we'll get on still better. And then one fine day..."

"Iben," she said. "You're absolutely the last man on earth I could ever imagine myself falling for."

That made me laugh. Long and heartily. But suddenly I stopped and looked at her, and realized that she really meant it.

"I say, why do you say that?" I said.

She took my hand and bent the fingers back as she spoke. It hurt a bit, but I liked it all the same. She looked down, and a fair curl fell over her forehead, so I couldn't catch her eye.

"Iben," she said. "You may as well know at once that men like you are the most detestable creatures I know."

"Ow," I said. "Strong language, lady."

"I mean it," she said. "And I know your sort pretty well from bathing resorts and mountain hotels and bars and ballrooms. You are well-dressed and sunburnt and rich and elegant, and I've no doubt you can get a hundred women a year if you want them, and you do. But you won't get me."

Well, that was pretty straight from the shoulder, wasn't it? I took my hand away, finished my glass, and lit a cigarette. She sat there looking at me, and her eyes were big and grey and sorrowful.

"Iben," she said. "I didn't say that to hurt you. I wouldn't have said it at all if you weren't..."

"It's O.K.," I said. "You're probably right, at that."

We sat quite a while without saying anything, and I felt pretty low. I'd been so deuced happy the last few hours, had felt that we'd got so close to one another and become such good comrades. Now everything was in pieces; we hadn't any more to say to one another, somehow, and I felt like shedding a tear or two. She got hold of my hand again, and patted it.

"I'm sorry about it, Iben," she said.

"Oh, don't be sorry," I said. "I asked for it. And

it's true. I understand your opinion of me, and at bottom I agree with you. It's all right. It was pretty cool cheek on my part to say what I did."

"Yes," she said, nodding. "It made me feel so . . . so cheap."

"No, no," I said. "If any one's cheap, it's me."

She squeezed my hand, hard and warmly, and said:

"You're sweet, anyway."

Now it's pretty hard for a man to be quite sweetly sent about his business and then be told that he's sweet, anyway. It smarted. I said to myself that I hadn't really any reason to be sore. She was quite right. I was one of the black market's best customers, and a professional charmer, and a loafer, and generally speaking a twerp in the eyes of the Lord. Those were the naked facts, which nobody could deny. But all the same—or perhaps just because of that—I lost my temper.

"When you look at me like that I really don't understand what you're doing with me at all."

I said it sharply and coldly, and saw how much it grieved her. Her eyes grew large, and she shook her head once or twice, as if to defend herself against the chilly tone that had come between us. But when she answered, her voice was just as cold and business-like as my own.

"In the first place we need quite a lot of your money," she said.

"Oh, yes, of course," I said.

"And then we can use a man of your type."

"You don't say?" I said, trying to be sarcastic, but only making myself angry. "What could a man like me be used for?"

"As camouflage," she said. "There are things that need doing which mean that I have to be about quite a bit in public. And we don't want our friends beginning to ask: 'Who is that woman? What's she up to? I need a cavalier. A man like you.'"

I mulled this over a moment, just boiling inside.

"You mean that no one could suspect you of having a single serious thought in your head when you can go about with a chappie like me of your own free will?"

She looked at me with her head on one side, and smiled beseechingly.

"Iben," she said. "Don't be angry."

"That's what you meant, wasn't it?"

She took her bag and her gloves, and got up. Just stood there looking at me, very grave.

"Yes," she said. "Do you want me to go now?"

I was so angry I couldn't say a word. What utter cheek! Camouflage, eh? A teashop lion on a lead! Talk about missions! Contribution to the nation, eh? Iben Holt has a smack at winning the war! Employed as chaperon to female partisan! Notorious charmer wanted to divert any possible suspicions!

My head slowly cleared, and in the middle of my fury it struck me that the plan was deuced smart. As a matter of fact it *was* practically impossible to suspect a woman in my company of higher interests. Face up to the truth, laddie! I laughed.

"Sit down, my lovely," I said, "before I put you over my knee and wallop you."

She brightened. I could see how pleased she was. Her eyes were blue again, and sparkling. I loved her.

"Thank you, Iben," she said. "I had a feeling you had a sense of humour."

"You're trying it very hard, Petter. But I love you."

She sat down and took my hand again and bent the fingers back. It was evidently a bad habit of hers when she found something difficult to say. But I liked it.

"You mustn't talk like that any more," she said.

"Oh, yes, I must," I said. "Three times a day, and an unlimited number more times if our work keeps us up after midnight."

"You'll take the job on, then?"

"You bet. What title do I get?"

"You'll be regarded in wide circles as my lover."

"But we two know better, eh?"

"We know better."

I filled our glasses, emptying the bottle. Then I leaned back in my chair and laughed.

"You're the cheekiest woman I've ever eaten herrings with," I said.

"I know," she said.

"And the sweetest."

She smiled gaily and raised her glass.

"Here's to co-operation!"

"Here's to love!"

We went out. I waited for her in the lobby, and bought an evening paper. A huge black heading swaggered over the front page:

FRONTIER POLICEMAN MURDERED BY TWO JEWS

and underneath, in slightly smaller but still very vehement type :

How long must we tolerate the Jewish criminals in Norway ?

Petter joined me, and I took back all I'd thought about women not being beautiful in a fur coat.

"Look," she said. "I've thought things over. If you'd been different, very different, then who knows?"

"I am different, Petter," I said. "I get differenter and differenter every minute. And dam' me if I don't show you that I'm good for something else than—camouflage."

"That's grand," she said. "Go in and try."

"Read this," I said.

She did so, and a thoughtful wrinkle appeared over her nose ; it was distractingly becoming.

"We're going to have a lot to do," she said.

V I I

THE VERY DAY after the murder it was plain we were heading for hideous times, and November was an anxious month.

For me much had changed, and it was true, as I'd told Petter, that I'd become different. For the first time in my life I felt that I had other people round about me, and that their sorrows and joys concerned me. It was strange, and in many ways it made me uneasy. I'd plumped down into everything as the result of an unexpected happening one night, when I was pretty well oiled and ready for almost anything, and each day I got further and further into the work and enjoyed it. I had no illusions that I was doing it for the sake of my country, or anything noble like that. I did it because Petter thought I was a poor fish. One day she wouldn't think that any longer.

Every day the tone against the Jews became more and more menacing in the press. The ghost of the dead constable walked the columns and clamoured for vengeance. Every one knew something was going to happen, perhaps in a few days—some dreadful blow that would spare nobody.

My flat had been turned into a kind of reporting centre. No one suspected me, my telephone was safe, and in the enormous block of flats it was impossible to check every one who came in and out. I still knew practically nothing of the work Petter and her friends did. I hadn't seen Gingersnits again, nor yet my brutal friend with the revolver from the "State

Police." All sorts of people came up with messages which I didn't understand, but sent on. I understood there were a lot of us, and that we were to be found in every class—that was all.

Naturally it hurt me. I met Petter practically every day. We were already a familiar sight at The Palms, and her reputation didn't improve from the partnership. I'm pretty sure she trusted me—it wasn't that. But she didn't seem to take me into account, somehow.

I had become different. I drank quite a bit less, and didn't miss it. And I thought quite a bit about different things, and it sometimes happened that I was quite pleased with the result and realised that I wasn't perhaps quite such a bonehead as most people thought.

When I wasn't out with Petter I sat at home, and the funny thing was that I quite liked it.

One wet dark evening in November I was sitting with an old Wodehouse and a weak Scotch-and-soda and a pipe all nice and cosy, when there was a ring at the door.

There was a young woman outside, and as soon as I opened the door she walked past me into the flat, whispering :

"Shut the door."

I shut the door. I was pretty accustomed to strange visits by this time. Once in the room she took off her fur coat with a swift nervous movement, selected a cigarette from the box on the table, and lit it with a hand that trembled a little.

She was a nobby girl. Not tall, and perhaps a bit too plump for my taste, but nobby. Her hair was black as coal and her eyes large and dark, and I thought : I'll bet she could show her claws if necessary. Her mouth was on the large side, but gorgeous all the same, and her nose had just the incredibly fine shape that member does have now and then on really successful Jewesses.

"Excuse me for crashing in" she said, and her voice was deep and a trifle lazy. "I'm Marion."

"Good-evening, Marion," I said. "Sit down and have a drink."

She looked at me and smiled. She didn't look so frightened any longer. She curled up in the corner of the sofa like a beautiful indolent cat, and she took the glass I gave her and swallowed it in one draught, straight.

"Have you heard about me?" she asked.

"No," I said. "I'm new to the branch and I'm not told very much. But I'm all right. You can trust me."

"I know. Can I stop here the night?"

"It would make me very happy," I said.

She smiled and winked at me.

"I don't know that I quite like your tone; it's a bit too hospitable," she said.

"I meant nothing bad by it," I said.

"Who's talking about bad?" she said. "So long as you don't mean too well, I'm satisfied."

"We've begun at the wrong end," I said. "First of all: How do you do, and to what do I owe the honour?"

"I'm not at all well, and you owe the honour to the Gestapo.

"Splendid," I said. "Had supper?"

"No. You don't mean there's anything to eat here?"

"This is just where it is. Take a drink and we'll go and burgle the larder."

She took a pretty good gulp of Jacob's black market whisky, and gave a bit of a shudder.

"I'm frozen to the marrow," she said.

I went in and fetched my bath-robe, and she looked incredibly sweet in it. Funny that women all look so seductive when they get that kind of thing on.

"That's better," she said. "And now for the larder."

She trundled out in the heavy bath-robe, and we unearthed ham and beer and brandy and a whole lot of other things we needed, and went into the sitting-room again.

"I like you," she said, with her mouth full.

"Good," I said. "And what have you been doing to the Gestapo?"

"Oh, this and that."

Very well. If she didn't want to tell me about it, she needn't. I put a few pieces of wood into the stove and lit a forbidden fire. When I looked up again, she was sitting there smiling.

"Are you peeved now?"

"Far from it," I said. "You don't know me at all, I can see."

"Petter believes in you implicitly. Well, you see, I've got a secret transmitter and am in contact with London."

I could see she was pretty game.

"And now there's danger on the line?"

"Looks like it. I'm afraid they may be coming to-night, so I thought it more practical to clear out. If they really do get on my tracks I may just as well hit the trail for Sweden. I must say it would be fun to see Piccadilly Circus again. My father was an Englishman."

"Well, anyway, you're safe here for the present."

She wiped her fingers on her napkin and crept up into the sofa again. Then she laughed. A strange laugh, almost as if she didn't know she was laughing.

"Am I?"

"Ab-so-lutely."

She took a cigarette and lit it, then blew the smoke out slowly and threw the match in the fire.

"Then rumour has exaggerated."

I looked at her and felt that I was no more than human. She was worth looking at.

"Oh, is that what you're getting at?" I said. "As a matter of fact, I've changed quite a bit. You are honestly quite safe."

She smiled and mixed a whisky-and-soda.

"It's grand to be safe," she said. And sighed.

I laughed, and her eyes flashed. She got up and threw off the bath-robe and came up to me as I stood with my back to the mantelpiece with my pipe in my hand.

"I know what you think," she said. "And I don't care—you can think what you like. It's true. I long to be a woman again, just a woman—long to be frivolous, free, and happy. To forget. Can't you understand that?"

She took me by the lapels and kissed me hard and passionately. I felt nothing special. She tasted of whisky and lipstick.

"These two years have been hell. Day and night on the rack, without a thought for anything except work. With potassium cyanide in my handbag. I feel as if I'd been married to the damned transmitter."

She sank down in the chair in front of me and laid her face against my hand. I felt my hand grow wet.

"There, there, Marion," I said. "Your nerves are going back on you, that's all that's the matter with you."

She looked up, her face wet with tears.

"I've been so scared," she said. "I felt them creeping nearer and nearer, knowing more and more. When I went to bed at night, I always thought: They're coming to-night. You may be dead to-morrow."

"I understand," I said.

"And to-night, when I banged the door of my flat and went off I thought: This is the end. Now you can't do anything more. You're free. You're a human being again. Can you understand that?"

I nodded. She sat there trembling. The whole of her body

shook as if convulsed. She was' like a thoroughbred 'horse after a hard-run race.

I put my hand on her shoulder, and it seemed to make her calmer. She lifted her head slowly and smiled.

"I don't mean what I've been saying" she said. "You believe, that, don't you?"

"Of course I do, Marion."

"It's only that I'm so tired . . . I'm not frivolous."

"Of course you aren't."

"And you mustn't think I want you."

"No, of course not. Now I think you ought to go to sleep."

She lay back in the chair with closed eyes.

"I never get a chance to sleep," she murmured. "I haven't slept for ages."

Her face smoothed out, and a faint contented smile played round her lips. She looked like a child. I realized that she was absolutely at the end of her tether.

"Kiss me," she whispered. "Just once, so that I can feel what it's like to be a woman again."

I bent down and kissed her.

"Go to sleep now, Marion."

I went and fetched the bath-robe, and spread it over her. She was already asleep. I stood there for a while looking at her. Then I carried her into the guest-room and tucked her into the bed, and went quietly out and shut the door after me.

Petter ought to have seen me now, I thought.

I woke at eight and remembered Marion. When I got into the guest-room she had gone. There was a note on the sitting-room table:

There's something I've got to do. I shall be careful. I'll be coming back—Marion.

But she didn't come back.

PART TWO

MARION

VIII

IT WAS STILL pretty empty at The Palms when I sat down to wait for Petter. The news wasn't very encouraging. The clouds were gathering. All Jewish property had been confiscated. Male Jews were being sent to the concentration camp at Tonsberg. Things going badly on the Eastern front. Going badly in Africa. Going badly in the Atlantic.

I felt that she'd come. It's absolutely true. I always feel when she's near, and shall go on doing so till she or I or love dies. She looked tired and pretty haunted.

"Petter, I love you," I said.

"Oh, can't you stop that?" she said. "Was Marion at your place last night?"

"Yes," I said. "But nothing happened."

"Iben," she said. "I don't give a tuppenny dam' whether anything happened or not. But something has happened to-day, all right."

"Oh?"

"They've got her."

I whistled.

"She was insanely imprudent. She must have known there was danger ahead when she went to you last night. Anyway, she went up to her flat this morning. They were there. Hiding in the bathroom, waiting for her."

I shook my head slowly. Poor little Marion.

"She was absolutely at the end of her tether," I said.

"Her nerves must have let her down."

"Rot. Marion hasn't got any nerves."

"Oh, indeed? You should have seen her yesterday evening."

"She was probably only acting. She's always doing that."

I grew red. Acting? Perhaps I was pretty simple, after all.

"What have they done with her?"

"In number 19.¹ And it won't be any joke for her."

"Do you think she'll split?"

¹ 19 Möllergaten, Gestapo prison in Oslo.

"Marion? Never. But how are we going to get her out?"

I didn't answer. I felt completely helpless. How *does* one get people out of prison?

Petter pondered. She really is amazingly sweet when she's thoughtful. I felt I was getting deeper and deeper in love with her, but then I told myself that this wasn't just the right minute and so I thought of Marion instead. They'd be foul to her. Flog her. Torture her.

"Go home, Iben," said Petter. "And wait for us. We must hold a little council of war."

"Right," I said. "I'll have some strong coffee ready."

Otto was the first to arrive. He grinned broadly when he saw me, and stretched out his hand.

"I enjoyed our last meeting no end."

I squeezed his hand and thought the fellow not half bad. He radiated amazing strength and confidence, and I thought: If any one can get Marion out, it's him.

"You must have had quite a good laugh at me," I said.

"Oh, well," he said. "But, honestly, I was pretty impressed."

Well I didn't mind hearing that, and I said:

"Sit down and have a drink."

He sat down and lit a cigarette.

"Interrogations like that are no joke," he said. "Most people usually lose their heads. You were no exception, for that matter, but you succeeded in holding your tongue and that was the main thing."

"How long have you been waging this private war?" I asked, sipping my whisky-and-soda.

"Since April, 1940," he replied.

"And it's gone well all the time?"

He smiled, a bitter, rather grim smile, and said:

"Depends how you look at it. It's gone well for me. They're not as dangerous as they think they are. So far we've always found they're a bit stupider than we are. This drink is good."

"If only I could be a bit of use," I said.

"You can," he said. He lifted his glass. "My name's Otto Frank, but you'd better forget the Frank, for we prefer to keep to Christian names only. And we might as well start right away you and I."

"Right," I said. "Do you think we can get Marion out?"

"What's the use of *thinking*? We've *got* to get her out. Whether we get her out alive is another matter."

I winced.

"Are the stories about what they do to their prisoners really true?"

"Yes," he said, "they're true."

"To women, too?"

"To women, too."

His face contracted, as though he had a pain somewhere or as if something disagreeable had crossed his mind, and he passed his hand over his forehead.

Then Petter arrived, and five minutes later a chap dropped in whom I'd never seen before. The others called him Olaf, and I can't say he appealed to me much. He was small and rather fat, and might have been about fifty, and he had a queer way of looking at people, as though he wouldn't have put anything past them.

"I can only stay ten minutes," he said. "I have a feeling they're beginning to keep an eye on me, so it isn't advisable for me to be around too much. In future I'll send messages through Siri; then she can phone here."

"What's the position?" said Petter.

"They arrived with her about eight. I was on guard and only caught a glimpse of her. I wasn't able to speak to her of course. They shoved her into the German section at once. She looked all right—then."

"Which cell has she got?"

"Number 6, looking on the yard. There's no prospect of getting her out from there."

Otto said:

"We've *got* to get her out, so it's no use talking like that."

Olaf pulled down his waistcoat, which had ridden up a bit over his round paunch, and smiled sorrowfully at Otto.

"I know everything about that prison, Otto," he said. "When I say it's impossible to get her out of Number 6, you can take it from me it's true."

Otto got up hastily and began walking backwards and forwards over the floor, puffing clouds of smoke from his cigarette.

"How much do they know, d'you think?"

"Not much. They haven't found the transmitter. But they *think* a whole lot, and that's almost worse for her."

"Has she been grilled yet?"

"Lord, yes. In the cell. They take no chances, and plainly have no intention of taking her to Victoria Terrasse.¹ If only they'd done that, we could always have had a shot at rescuing her during the drive."

¹ Gestapo headquarters in Oslo.

"What sort of grilling?"

"Pretty gruelling, I fancy. Being a Jewess doesn't make things easier for her, you know."

No one said anything, and there was a general gloom.

"Have a drink?" I said.

"No, thanks," he said. "I really must go. I'm on duty. Someone has blown open a safe in the Hird Centre, in Bridge Street, and they've put me on to the job."

"Haven't you any suggestion *at all*?" said Petter.

"No. I'll keep a look-out, and we must hope they'll transfer her."

"But good God, they may kill her in the meantime."

"Yes, they may," said Olaf. "But Marion'll scrape through somehow. She's got her head screwed on the right way."

He put on his coat and perched an old hat, with grease marks on the brim, on the top of his head.

"See anything of Gingernuts?" he asked.

"Why do you ask that?" said Otto.

Olaf shrugged. "To tell the truth, this business at Bridge Street reminds me quite a bit of him. If you see him, tell him from me to be careful. There are certain things that even I may be *forced* to discover."

Some ghastly days followed. Petter wasn't to be spoken to, I hardly ever saw Otto, but when he came up now and then his face was set, and it looked as though he'd altogether given up sleeping. Even I, who'd only seen Marion once, often woke up in the night and thought of what they were doing to her until I was bathed in cold sweat and had to take a good-sized brandy to calm down again.

I didn't go out any more. I practically lived by the telephone, to be ready for any message from Olaf.

The problem of Marion lay like a heavy burden on all of us, and all our thoughts circled round it without our being able to see any solution. The frenzy against the Jews had been forced to the utmost limit, the most atrocious abuses belonged to the order of the day; hirdmen forced their way into people's flats and pulled the diamond rings off the wife's fingers, and dragged away the husband to the concentration camp at Tonsberg.

On the morning of November 25th there was a ring on the telephone. I leapt out of bed and took the receiver, quivering with excitement, as I always did nowadays when a ring came in the daytime.

"This is Siri speaking," said a voice, the mild, gentle voice

of an elderly woman. "If you can come in to-day I think we can arrange about that half-share in the State lottery."

"Grand," I said. "In half an hour."

I was there before my time, and went into the little cigar-shop. There were no customers, and the old lady behind the counter gave me a friendly smile. She had white hair and a high-necked dress, with a little gold watch pinned to the bosom, and she came from Stavanger. I thought: She's got a sense of humour, and a stout heart.

"I hope you're well, Siri," I said.

"Yes, thank you," she said with a smile. "Olaf was here this morning. Marion is to be transferred to-morrow, probably at nine."

"Where to?"

"He didn't know for certain, but probably Akershus."

I shuddered. Akershus is the last port of call. One's not infrequently sent there the day before being put up against a cold wall at dawn.

"He asked me to say that the transfer would naturally be made by Germans, but they've ordered a Norwegian car. If anything's to be done it must be in the second before the men come out to take over the car."

I thought it sounded hopeless, but it wasn't my place to say anything.

"Did he say any more?"

"He says that something hideous is brewing, and he believes it'll break to-morrow, but he doesn't yet know what it is. He'll let you know as soon as he can."

"Hm," I said. "Thanks."

I'd got my hand on the door-knob, when she called to me.

"I hope you'll be able to do something," she said. "I've got a last packet of Frisco, if you'd like it."

I felt something damp in the corner of my eye.

"Keep it, lady," I said. "I'm a black market profiteer and manage all right."

"You must on no account misunderstand the situation," said Otto. "This has got to be done, and it can be done, but it's about a hundred to one that it'll go down the drain."

He was terribly serious and rather pale, and he didn't seem to be frightfully keen on the job. There was nothing adventurous about Otto. He wasn't doing this for the fun of the thing. He took it scientifically and seriously and pretty coldly, and I have a suspicion he thought Marion wasn't quite worth the risk.

We were in the sitting-room, and if any outsider had looked in he would only have seen a handful of people drinking coffee. But if he'd looked a bit closer he might have found it was a pretty queer handful. Petter and Otto fitted into the scenery all right. But Gingernuts wasn't exactly the type you'd expect to find in a genteel sitting-room in the Oslo district. Nor did the fifth member of the company look as though he belonged in my Chippendale chair. His name was Thorstein, and he was a lorry-driver.

I'd succeeded in getting Gingernuts to exchange his infernal pipe for a cigar, but Thorstein wasn't to be coaxed, and there he sat listening to us with a faint smile and sending out enormous clouds of poisonous smoke. I think he was the ugliest chap I've ever met, but as soon as I saw him I knew we were going to be friends. It would have been quite impossible to be anything else. He was large, and obviously as strong as a bear; his eyes were as open and honest as a child's, and he had a smile that put one in a good mood at once.

I'm no connoisseur of my fellow creatures, but it wasn't easy to make a mistake about Thorstein. I thought: He may not have an awful lot of brains, but he knows exactly what to do in a tight corner. And he's ready for anything, and the worse it looks the better he likes it.

Now he took his pipe out of his mouth and said to Otto:

"We get it. That's O.K. Let's settle what we're going to do."

"It's not O.K.," said Otto. "Naturally we're going to do it, and it wouldn't surprise me if we succeeded. But it'll be the last thing we do here. After that, all we've got left is to disappear and take the shortest cut to Sweden. We can't help being recognized, and I think it's a bit damnable we have to give up all the work we're doing here."

"I'm not leaving for Sweden," said Gingernuts. "Lord love you, I'm used to being wanted by the police. I wouldn't feel happy otherwise. I'm wanted now, if it comes to that."

"Don't let's look for trouble," said Thorstein. "If only we can do it quick enough, they won't see much of us, likely as not."

Otto smiled and shook his head.

"When I listen to you I really begin to believe it'll go off all right."

"Course it will," said Gingernuts. "We've only got the spadework. If you do your bit all right, everything's O.K."

Otto spread out on the table a sketch of the back yard of the prison and the police station at 19 Möller Street.

"The worst of it is that we don't exactly know when they're transferring her," he said. "Olaf has promised to try and give us a sign from the window here in the corridor of the Criminal Department. But it's impossible for him to give a sign just at the very moment Marion is taken out. We must keep in the vicinity and try and pull it off as well as we can."

"If everything goes according to plan, the programme will be this:

"About nine o'clock the Black Maria will be waiting in the yard with a Norwegian police-driver at the wheel. Marion will be taken out and into the car, probably by two men. One or two more men will probably come from the guard-room. And then the gate will be opened.

"At the same moment as this happens, a Sturmbannführer from the S.S. will come up to the gate and poke his nose in and distract the attention of the guard as much as possible. The Sturmbannführer will be me. You follow on immediately after me, Thorstein, in the uniform of the Norwegian police and with Gingernuts by the scruff of the neck. Gingernuts can do a bit of resisting. You'll pass right by the car here on the way to the entrance to the police station, and just as you're passing, you let Gingernuts go. He gets hold of the police-driver and pulls him out; you, Thorstein, nip in and drive out with Marion as though all the devils in hell were at your heels. Gingernuts must get away as well as he can, and so must I. Clear?"

"Fine," said Thorstein.

"It all fits," said Gingernuts.

"I shall see that the soldiers are collected behind the car while this is going on, so that they can't shoot at Thorstein. When the car's well away, I'll begin to shoot after it, but I needn't exactly use ball. And then I'll run out after it into the street, so that the soldiers can't shoot for fear of hitting me. After that we must hope for the best. Thorstein, you go up past the Ministry of Justice, and you know the rest yourself."

"Look here," I said. "How about my having a taxi here on the corner? Then you could pop into it. What could be more natural than for you to continue the pursuit in a taxi?"

He looked at me with dawning respect.

"That mightn't be such a bad idea," he said. "Then I take off my uniform in the taxi, and then we can go peacefully home and have a drink afterwards."

"And before you've got the cork out of the bottle," said Gingernuts, "I'll be there being the life and soul of the party."

I looked at them and thought: These are human beings. They are real human beings who want something, and can do something. I was proud of sitting there together with them. And it was rather queer that what we were going to do tomorrow was dangerous enough, but no one seemed to consider that side. We were enjoying ourselves, and we talked about it as though it were something we were looking forward to.

"We'd better spend the night here," said Otto. "We ought if possible to be all together in case there should be any changes made during the night, and this is the best place I can think of."

"Not half," said Gingernuts. "I took a squint into his cupboard while I was in the W.C., and we shan't die of thirst."

"That cupboard is locked, Gingernuts," I said, laughing.

"Is it?" he said. "I didn't notice that. But you may be right."

And then there was a ring at the door.

"The beggars!" said Thorstein. "Can they have . . . ?"

I went out and looked through the peephole, and there stood Olaf, so I let him in.

"This is dam' unwise of me, I know," said Olaf. "But a number of things are happening that it would be as well you knew about. There's just been a big council of war in the State Police barracks in Church Street, and they're going on the rampage. Everything in the way of Jews—men, women and children indiscriminately—is going to be arrested during the night and taken on board the German cargo-boat *Donau*, which is lying at the American Line quay."

We said nothing. Petter had gone white, Otto set his jaw, and Thorstein sat with clenched fists staring into space.

"Where are they going to be taken?" asked Petter.

"I don't know. They guess Poland. They're all to go. The old people. Expectant mothers. Invalids. There are no exceptions here."

"Are you going to help arrest them?" Gingernuts asked.

The fat little man gave us a look so full of despair that it hurt.

"Yes," he said.

"That'll be nice for you, won't it?" said Gingernuts.

"Shut up," said Otto sharply. "You can see from his face that he isn't exactly hugging himself about it."

"Cops are all alike," said Gingernuts. "They've got it in the blood."

Olaf stood there looking infinitely little and downcast, fingering his hat.

Petter said :

"Take it easy, Olaf. We know how you feel. You don't help any one by protesting, and Gingernuts knows that as well as we do. If I *had* to be arrested, I'd rather you did it than any one else."

"Thanks for that, anyway," said Olaf, in a low voice, with his eyes on the ground.

"This is a bloody shame," said Thorstein. "We ought to do something about it."

"Yes," said Otto. "But we've got our own business to think of. Marion must be got out. Anything fresh about her, Olaf?"

"No, I don't think so. You'll hear as soon as I know anything."

Then he slunk out into the darkness. I felt sorry for him, and began to think better of him.

I X

THE OTHERS took a key each, and were out the greater part of the night to warn as many as they could, and get them cover as far as possible. I got orders to sleep beside the telephone, and I don't mind telling you I didn't sleep much. I thought about Marion and about what was going to happen to-morrow, and the more I thought about it the crazier it seemed. The only thing in favour of the plan was its utter daring. A single mistake would dish everything, and the only one who had any chance of getting away was me. And even if everything went off all right, even if it went off better than the biggest optimist in the world could hope, I simply could not see how Gingernuts was going to manage a getaway. I thought a lot about Gingernuts and mulled over what he had said, and I came to the conclusion that he had everything taped, and knew how slim his chances were.

I must have fallen asleep at last, for the next thing I remember was someone shaking me hard by the shoulder, and when I opened my eyes, there was a German police officer bending over the bed with my pyjamas in his iron grip.

I had time to get into the most cerulean funk before I recognized Otto.

"It's seven o'clock," he said. "We're going to have a little coffee and add the finishing touches."

He really did look pretty convincing. The sharp, well-defined face suited the uniform, and I knew he'd play the part well. He hadn't tried any tricks with make-up or false moustaches or anything, but he had quite simply *become* German. His voice was sharp and rasping, there was a brutal horizontal wrinkle at the top of his nose, and his very eyes had got a hard, cold brightness, which was pretty terrifying.

"You look foul," I said, satisfied, and thought that it dam' well might come off after all.

"How are you going to get hold of that taxi?" he asked.

"I'll steal it just before we start. I've got everything mapped out."

"Good." He yawned. "God, I'm tired. But things went quite well last night. I got fourteen off, six women and three children among them. Petter got warnings to eleven. That's always something. They began rounding them up at two, and I don't mind telling you they're doing it thoroughly. There are at least two hundred police cars on the job now."

I slipped out into the kitchen and put the coffee on, and then I began to get dressed.

"As a matter of fact it suits us quite well," he said. "There'll be such a congestion of Black Marias in the street that no one'll pay much attention to Thorstein when he drives through the town."

"Listen," I said. I'd heard a key in the lock.

It was Thorstein and Gingernuts, and Gingernuts was as mad as a hornet.

"I just don't understand these Jews!" he said, throwing himself into a chair so hard that it creaked warningly beneath him. "They don't seem to believe anything. They want to wait and see. They're sure it won't be as bad as all that. Perhaps it's only a rumour, and the Germans are human beings, too! Not half they aren't! Most of them want to sleep on it. Well, well, pleasant dreams!"

Thorstein laughed.

"They naturally thought you only wanted to get them out of the house so's you could pinch the spoons.

Gingernuts looked at him in horror.

"D'you think that was why?"

We all laughed, and I poured out the coffee. Otto said:

"You must buck up into your uniform, Thorstein. We've got to be all set."

Thorstein nodded and shook it out. He'd got the trousers on when the telephone rang. I picked up the receiver.

I could hear it was Olaf, though all he said was: "It's me." And I also heard that he was pretty shaken, although he tried to speak as if what he had to say was of no importance at all.

"Excuse me ringing so early," he said. "But I'm just off to work."

"That's quite all right," I said.

"That picnic's no go to-day," he said.

"Oh?"

"Yes, something came between."

"Has—has she got something the matter with her?"

"Not exactly. But she got a chance to go with the others."

"Which others?"

"Good God, all the others. The ones I was telling you about last night. So you see she had to accept. You'll hear from Siri if there's anything doing."

"Half a jiff," I exclaimed. "Can't we go down and see her off?"

"No, no," he said. "Far better not. Cheeroh!"

He'd rung off.

I put the receiver down very slowly and told the others what he'd said.

Otto took off his cap and hurled it into a chair.

"It's as clear as mud," he said. "They've got her on board the *Donau*. She'll land up in Poland."

Nobody said anything for a bit. At last Thorstein spoke.

"We might nip down and see . . ."

"Olaf didn't think it would be any use," I said.

"And he was right, too," said Otto. "No one's allowed on to the quay, far less on board. And naturally they'll guard her thoroughly."

He took a turn or two up and down the room, and his hand went nervously through and through his hair.

"But it's plain we've got to try, anyway," he said.

Thorstein knocked out his pipe and took off his uniform trousers.

"I'll take the lorry and coast about a bit down there," he said. "I do that almost every day, so there's nothing fishy about it. Then we can see if there's any chance."

Otto nodded. Gingernuts said:

"Shall I come with you?"

Thorstein laughed.

"The best thing for you to do would be not to show your

ugly mug out of doors at all. You'd be off your onion to go down on to the quay now. There must be about two hundred cops collected there with your description in their pockets ! ”

I can remember a number of hours in my life that I enjoyed more than that wait. We sat there and couldn't even talk to one another. Our nerves were unbearably on edge, and we were pretty irritable. It grew light quickly outside, and promised a gloomy grey day. There was a slight drizzle, and the sky hung low over the town like a heavy steel helmet.

At half-past eight the telephone rang again. Olaf.

“ Pop into Siri's at quarter to nine,” he said. And hung up.

Otto was white with excitement.

“ For Christ's sake find out everything he knows,” he said.

“ If only I could run down myself.”

“ Yes, thanks,” I said. “ In that get-up. You leave that to me.”

Thorstein came up in the lift just as I left, and he shook his head.

“ No use at all,” he said.

I ran all the way to the cigar-shop, and just as I reached it a police car stopped outside and Olaf got out. There was a hirdman in the car sitting beside the driver.

We entered the shop at the same time, and Olaf said to the woman :

“ If you've got a packet of cigarettes, Ma, let's have it.”

She smiled and went into the back room. Olaf looked straight in front of him and pretended not to know me, but he talked the whole time, so low that I could hardly hear :

“ She's on board the *Donau*. In the third mate's cabin on the lower deck aft. Guards, of course. The boat goes at eleven. There's a hell of a mess on board, and hundreds of people are packed in the hold. Gangway and entrances to the quay guarded. Nearly hopeless. But there might be a chance if Otto will take it. Apparently the boat hasn't enough provisions, and they've told people off to go and order five tons of potatoes from different shops round the town. That's all I know, and now I must run. Were there any, Ma ? ”

She came out of the back room and gave him a packet of “ Teddy,” and he ran out into the street and drove off. I realized how scared he was, and that he thought he was running the hell of a risk.

When I came home Petter was there, and they all four of them fell on me.

"Potatoes," said Otto. "Have you got any potatoes, Iben?"

"Have I hell?" I said. "I've hoarded six hundred-weight."

"Sacks?" said Otto.

"I can get some," said Thorstein, and went out.

Otto drank a cup of cold coffee and concentrated hard. We sat looking at him in silence. At last he got up and began to pace about the floor.

"I'll appear in this uniform," he said. "Thorstein will drive on to the quay with the potatoes, and you can help to carry them, Iben. Then all that's left is to get on board, and that must be possible somehow."

"What about me?" said Gingernuts.

"You stay here. It would be madness for you to go down on to the quay."

"I've been known to take a chance before now," said Gingernuts.

Otto stood still looking at him, and spoke very slowly.

"You can go to the devil for all I care," he said. "If you're pinched and shot or roasted or hanged, drawn, and quartered, it's all the same to me. But if they get you, they get us, too, and Marion will land up in Poland. Does that sink into your thick head?"

Gingernuts gave a broad grin, and got up and patted him on the shoulder.

"Lumme, how you do fly off the handle," he said.

Thorstein and I sat in the front of the lorry driving down towards the harbour. Behind us, under the tarpaulin, lay all my laboriously hoarded potatoes stowed away in sacks. We had set our watches by Otto's, and were to meet him at the barrier at half-past nine sharp. I was dressed as a warehouseman, and had been careful not to overdo things. I looked like any one else, and didn't imagine any one would give me a second glance.

Afterwards I've often wondered whether I was frightened that morning, and I rather fancy I was. But not so much because of what was going to happen and what might happen. More because I might let them down at the crucial point. I found it difficult to sit still, and my stomach was very queasy.

Thorstein drove with a completely blank face, and his reassuring little smile hovered round the corner of his mouth and had rather a soothing effect.

People were going about their business as usual, and there

certainly can't have been any one there who knew about the frightful things going on down by the America Line quay. But all at once a black, covered patrol car came out from a side street and drove down towards the harbour.

"What's the time?" said Thorstein.

"Seven minutes to," I said.

He turned off and made a round along the promenade below Akershus, and it wasn't until we only had a minute left that we approached the quay.

There was congestion in front of the gates. One after the other the police cars drove in through the barrier. At the nearest street corner stood Gestapo soldiers with fixed bayonets, keeping off the curious. We drove slowly up to the gate, and at the same moment Otto came out of the green house in the pocket handkerchief of a park hard by, and marched briskly forward from the opposite direction.

We pulled up.

"No harm in cheek," said Thorstein, and hooted. One of the soldiers at the gate looked up angrily and shook his fist.

Otto came up to the car, jumped on to the running-board, and roared in German:

"Make way here!"

The Germans are obviously more afraid of a Sturmbannführer than they are of the devil himself. They rushed up and cleared a way in a twinkling, and we drove on to the quay. Otto didn't look at us at all; for just one second he leant forward towards Thorstein and said in a low voice:

"Getting on board's your own look-out."

Then he jumped off and went into the large shed. I saw the guards outside the door fly up and salute stiffly. Then he was gone.

"D'you know German?" said Thorstein.

"Yes," I said.

"Keep your mouth shut, then, and let me do the jabbing."

There wasn't much to see out here, but every time the door to the shed opened I heard screams and the sound of women crying, and gruff roars of command in German. The shed lies obliquely over the quay, and every one going on board has to pass through it.

I remembered the last time I went in at that door. I was going to New York, was wearing tails and a white tie, and had as escort six lads of the village, following the world's best farewell binge at the Bristol.

Thorstein unloaded the sacks, and we each took one on our backs and went up to the guard.

"Proviant," said Thorstein. "Kartofler. Rekviriert."
(Provisions. Potatoes. Ordered.)

I was pretty tense, but the guard only opened the door and pointed into the shed. We went through.

We walked through that shed so quickly that I didn't really see anything. And yet I have a thousand ghastly little memories from those seconds. The great cold space was bathed in white light from the strong electric lights. There were several hundred people in there. Old men, women and children. Actually, I only remember their eyes. Large, desperate eyes everywhere, filled with wild panic and utter hopelessness. And then their lamentations.

They stood there like sheep driven into small flocks surrounded by German soldiers in green uniforms. The whole scene had a deep, doleful undertone—a hopeless weeping, now and then interspersed with shrill hysterical screams, furious shouts, and the sound of blows.

I can't describe it and don't know if any one could. Don't know if I would if I could.

"Christ!" said Thorstein.

We had got to the door leading to the quay. An old man was on his knees by the door. He was bare-headed, and his grey hair flowed out over the collar of his coat. He was imploring and sobbing, and every now and then he banged his head against the stone wall. A fat corporal came up and kicked him. He fell face downwards right in front of our feet. And then we were outside.

Thorstein was white in the face and gritted his teeth hard. I felt pretty rotten, but I wasn't frightened any more, only angry. The *Donau* lay alongside the quay, a long, black ship with a low bridge aft, and the great hatches in front wide open. The Swastika flag hung ominously at the mast in the grey weather, blackened by soot from the funnel so that it looked like a pirate's flag.

Here on the quay stood three senior Norwegian policemen and three Germans in mufti. They stood with crossed arms, looking on. A bit farther off stood Otto. His face wasn't pleasant to look at, but it revealed nothing, and I thought it was impossible to say whether it belonged to a man shaken to the core, or to a brutal fiend who was standing there wallowing in the sight.

The gangway was about midships, but there weren't many who took that way. The loading was done with a great crane, and just as we came out it swung in over the quay and a large lattice-work cage was put down just at the entrance

to the shed. It was one of those cages they use to take livestock on board in. Then a flock of ten people were dragged out and hustled into the cage. I put down my sack and looked at them. First came an old man. He wasn't weeping, and he held his head high. Blood was running from his nose in two narrow streams down into his moustache, and he had no hat. When he got up to the cage he stopped short and turned towards the police officers. He raised his hand and called out some words I didn't understand ; perhaps they were Hebrew.

A soldier ran up, took him by the scruff of the neck, forced his head under the rim of the cage, and kicked him in. The officers laughed.

The rest were women. Two of them were walking as if in their sleep, with their arms round one another. They seemed to be sisters.

An old woman came out ; she stumbled in the doorway and fell headlong on the quay. She raised herself slowly on her hands and knees and looked round beseechingly. Then she threw herself down and beat her head against the stones of the quay, sobbing wildly. A soldier ran out and yanked her on to her feet. When he let go of her she threw herself on her knees and clung hard round his legs, screaming like an animal.

Someone gave a coarse laugh behind me. The soldier grew red. He bent down and struck her across the face with the flat of his hand. She fell sideways, and he lifted her up and threw her into the cage, where the others caught her.

Then the crane swung up into the air and sailed in a huge curve over the *Donau*, disappearing into the hold.

"Come on," said Thorstein.

I heaved my sack on to my back and we went towards the gangway, but we hadn't taken many steps before a fat N.C.O. barred our way.

"Wohin ?" (*lit.* Whither ?)

Thorstein looked up under his sack and mumbled :

"Proviant. Kartoffel. Rekviriert."

The fellow laughed.

"Good," he said in German. "But the swine must carry them on board themselves." He said a few words to the soldier beside him, who ran into the shed.

"What's up now ?" said Thorstein.

"Wait," I said.

The soldier came out again with two old men. They could hardly stand upright. One of them, a tall, skinny seventy-

year-old, staggered like a drunken man, and the soldier took him by the collar and dragged him along.

"Bloody swine," said Thorstein.

"What did you say?" asked the N.C.O. in Norwegian.

"I said: It's what they deserve, the swine."

The N.C.O. laughed.

The old men got the sacks on their backs and tottered towards the gangway. The thin one went first, and he tripped up on the slippery bridge and fell without being able to save himself at all, hitting his face on the planks with a hard bang. A lot of the potatoes rolled out of the sack and down on to the quay.

The N.C.O. kicked him, and he got up on to his knees. Blood was pouring from him, but he made no outcry; it looked as if he didn't even know where he was.

Thorstein laughed. I managed a smile, too, but it wasn't easy. Otto came up to us.

"That'll do," he said sharply in German. "We haven't time for any games."

The N.C.O. clicked his heels together and saluted.

"Orders, Herr Sturmbannfuhrer," he said.

"I know," said Otto. "But the provisions must be got on board, and there isn't much time." He turned towards the two Jews and gave an impatient kick at the old man who was still standing there clutching at the gangway.

"Weg!" (*lit.* Away!)

Thorstein and I lifted up the sacks again. Otto went past the N.C.O. and up the gangway. We padded after and up on to the deck.

Otto walked along as though he owned the vessel, and we followed him forward. The deck was crowded, the sailors dashed to and fro getting ready to sail, and now and then a Gestapo man passed us on the way to the gangway. I felt a cold chill down my back every time this happened, but they stiffened to attention at sight of Otto, and no one stopped us. We came up to the hatches and put down our sacks, and I looked down into the hold. It was like looking down into Inferno. Hundreds of people were packed together, and a stench rose from the place fit to suffocate me. I don't know what cargo the *Donau* had had, but the smell of it will figure in my dreams for a long time to come. Pitiful children's cries and fragments of heartrending entreaties rose up, and then this deep, doleful undertone again, those woe-laden moans from people tired to death, who have given up all hope and surrendered themselves entirely to misery.

The crane came swaying over the ship again with the cage, and two burly sailors steadied it at the edge of the hatch and directed it down into the hold. It looked as though the newcomers were emptied out on to the heads of those already there.

Otto didn't look at us, and he spoke without moving his lips.

"Leave the sacks here and come with me."

We followed him aft again. He moved abruptly through the crowd and every one got out of his way as soon as they saw his uniform. A soldier was hanging over the railing talking to a pal on the quay, and his broad backside barred the way. Otto took him by the shoulders and swung him round, and then fired off a lightning harangue in German, so that the soldier sprang to attention like a steel spring and remained standing there long after we'd gone by.

We went down a ladder, and continued aft on the lower deck, and Otto stopped in front of the third mate's cabin. Two men were standing there, armed with pistols.

"Aufmached!" said Otto. (Open!)

They looked a bit doubtful, and he banged furiously on the door.

"Quick!" he said.

One of the soldiers produced a key and unlocked the door.

I very nearly screamed when I saw Marion, and I heard Thorstein's jaw creaking. She was sitting on the floor with her head thrown back against the mate's bunk, and it was plain she was only half-conscious. Her eyes had been bunged up with blows, and her whole face was blue and yellow. At the top of her forehead was a great cake of congealed blood. Her left arm lay along the edge of the bunk in an unnaturally twisted position. Her blouse was torn to bits, and the left side of her breast was bare, and there were a couple of ugly streaks right across it.

"Aufstehen!" shrieked Otto. (Get up!)

I realised he was as shaken as we were, for by this time his voice was almost wild, and he looked as if he could murder any one.

She lifted her head, and I could see she was frightened. She tried to say something, but the words wouldn't come, and then her head fell forward and she sobbed under her breath like a little child.

"Aufstehen!"

She tried to get up, but fell headlong on her hands and knees, and when she tried to prop herself up on her left arm

it gave way under her, so that she remained lying with the top part of her body outside the cabin in an abnormally skew position, resting on the left shoulder with her face towards the floor.

Otto took her by the hair and pulled her on to her feet. He held her like that and she stood there swaying. It looked so diabolical that I could hardly keep from hitting him.

"Confrontation," he said harshly in German. "Do you know these two Norwegians?"

She opened her eyes as well as she could, and I had to strain my ears to hear her whisper: "Don't beat me any more . . . don't beat me any more. . . ."

"Damned bitch of a Jew!" yelled Otto. "Do you know these two Norwegians?"

She turned her head slowly and looked at us. I saw she was mustering all her strength saw reason returning, saw what she was thinking.

"I've never seen them before," she whispered in German.

"You're lying!" screamed Otto. Then he gave an evil laugh. "Have your own way. Interrogation!"

She collapsed again, and began sobbing afresh.

"No, no," she whispered. "Not any more . . . not any more. . . ."

The two soldiers had gone pale. They were pretty young chaps, and I think somehow they didn't find Otto a particularly attractive specimen.

"I'll take her with me," Otto said sharply. "This is important."

"The boat goes at eleven, Herr Sturmbannfuhrer," said one of the soldiers.

"That'll give me ample time," said Otto with another evil laugh.

He almost had to drag her with him along the narrow corridor, and when we got to the stairway up to the deck he drew us underneath it a minute. There was no one there, but they were stamping and screaming so much on the deck above that we hardly heard what he said.

"We'll take the chance," he said. "We'll go straight down the gangway, and if they stop me, I'll say she's going to be grilled. We'll go straight to the car, and there I'll let go of her. You chuck her in under the tarpaulin and drive like the devil, and I'll go on my way as though nothing had happened."

Thorstein shook his head, and I said:

"We'll never do it."

Otto was fearfully het-up now ; I saw he was nervous, and I don't hold that against him.

"The simplest way is nearly always the most cunning," he said. "What in Hades are we to do otherwise?"

We said nothing. "What in Hades *were* we to do otherwise?"

"Come on," said Otto.

We went up the ladder, and he peeped out on to the deck. I had hold of Marion. She had spunk, that girl—she turned her pitiful face to me and whispered:

"What's going on?"

"We're going to get you out," I said.

"Grand," she said, and smiled.

"It would be a help if you tried to walk by yourself," I said.

"O.K.," she said. "My legs are almost the only things they've let me keep."

Otto hurriedly drew his head in again, and I saw that he'd gone quite white.

"No use," he said. "It's all up now."

"What d'you mean?"

"Lucifer himself is posted at the gangway. His name's Hahn. He's the one that got her into that mess. He won't let us pass."

"Does he know you, too?"

His face assumed a grim expression, and his voice grew harsh.

"I know him. 'Nough said."

Well, we couldn't stay where we were. We were standing in the narrow passage between the stairway and the door out to the deck, and it was a miracle no one had come yet. I peeked out. Sure enough, a German in mufti had now joined the soldiers at the gangway. He was wearing a mackintosh and a rather ridiculous Tyrolean hat, but his face didn't exactly make you feel you wanted to laugh. It was hard as a lump of granite, and he might have lifted the mouth from a shark. His eyes were set deep under bushy blond eyebrows, and when he looked in my direction I pulled my head in again hurriedly, thinking all was lost.

"Yes, dam' it all!" I said. "I can't say I like the look of him."

"Let's try and get forward," said Thorstein. "At any rate we can hide in all this mess."

"Hide?" I said. "Are you particularly keen on going to Poland?"

He grinned.

"The ship's not leaving till eleven," he said. "As long as it's ten, there's hope."

We walked over on to the other side of the deck, the one towards the sea, and hurried forward. I looked out over the railing, but gave up that idea at once. The harbour police had got two boats plumb under the side of the ship, and the fellows had their guns all ready in the bows.

We came to the hatch again, and Thorstein loosened the heavy tarpaulin they put over it during the voyage, which was now rolled up beside the opening.

"Get in," he said to Marion.

She didn't react much any longer, and walked as if asleep. We pushed her in under the tarpaulin while the two sailors were busy receiving the cage from the quay.

It didn't look any too promising. I had a feeling we were pretty safe as long as we kept on board. Every one had so much to do that they paid no attention to us. I don't suppose they'd reckoned on people coming on board of their own free will, either. But it didn't look as though we had many prospects of getting on shore with Marion.

The grisly drama down on the quay went on. New weeping flocks were herded into the cage.

I saw two young women coming out of the shed; they were supporting an old, old man between them; he hung like a sack with his arms over their shoulders, and his face was yellow as parchment, with terribly hollow cheeks. He must have been over eighty. His eyes were shut, his mouth open, and his legs dragged after him like a doll's. The cage had just soared up, and the two girls stood there, so helpless on the quay with the old man. I saw them speak imploringly to a young officer, and he shrugged his shoulders and pointed to the gangway. Very, very slowly they began to drag their burden up it.

It was ghastly to watch. No one stirred a finger to help them. In the middle of the gangway they lost their hold, the old boy fell over on the narrow bridge and struck his head hard against the railing. He didn't seem to feel it. The girls took hold of him again and went on. I think it was ten minutes before they got to where I was sitting behind the hatches. One of them sank down weeping beside me, with the old man's head in her lap. He didn't move.

"Grandfather," she sobbed. "Grandfather, dear . . ."

She might have been seventeen. The other was older, twenty-five perhaps. She stroked her sister's hair and said :

"Let him be, Rebecca."

I turned away.

Otto was standing in front of the bows, and he had his hands clenched on the railing. I realized how desperately he was seeking some way out. Thorstein sat hidden behind the fore-castle hatch; he'd pulled out his pipe and was smoking quite philosophically.

Suddenly I heard a despairing scream behind me and turned my head. The young girl had thrown herself on the old man and was crying as though her heart would break.

I crept up to them and felt his hand.

"Grandfather," she whispered. "Dear Grandfather . . . you must wake up."

"He's dead," I said.

The elder of the sisters was sitting by the edge of the hatch. Her face was without expression; there was nothing there but a weariness without end.

"Rebecca," she said. "Let us thank God that Grandfather was allowed to die."

I looked at the old man, and was strangely impressed. His face had got something sort of uplifted and strong over it in death. His features were clear, and he looked as if they had been hewn in marble. He was like a statue of suffering personified. His eyes stared open and dead towards the sky.

The young girl closed them, and for a moment her hand rested on his forehead. She looked at me.

"You aren't a Jew," she said.

"No," I said. "I'm going ashore."

She thought a bit. The serious face under the thick black hair was beautiful. She was the head of the family now; the responsibility was on her shoulders.

"Do you think it would be possible to get Grandfather on shore?" she said. "I should so much like him to be buried."

I was just going to say that I had very little prospect of getting on shore myself. But then I had an idea.

"I'll try," I said.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" she said. "I shall pray to God to bless you for that."

She was thoughtful a while again, and said:

"He was a Christian."

"Oh," I said.

"He doesn't need to have a big funeral at all," she said quietly. "But I would be so glad. . . ."

There was a lump in my throat.

"I understand. I'll do what I can."

She nodded gravely and laid her sister's head on her breast. Rebecca cried quietly, and the older girl sat looking out over the sea, while her fingers gently caressed her sister's hair. She seemed to be far away and quite oblivious of the men tramping and shouting and swearing all round her, and of the despairing cries from the open hold.

I went up to the bows where Otto was and sat down under the railing at his feet, between two great coils of rope, and then I told him my idea. He stood looking down at the quay, and it was impossible to see if he were listening, but when I'd finished he said :

"Fine. It's a chance. But now we must get a move on." I stole off to Thorstein behind the deck-house, and put him wise. He got up, took one of the potato sacks and went right up to the bows with it. There he was very busy in front of the capstan for a bit, coming back with the sack empty.

One of the mates of the *Donau* came forward and saw us.

"What are you doing here?" he said. "You're not Jews."

He was quite a cheery sort of chap to look at, tubby and comfortable, with two pink rolls of fat at the back of his neck.

"Nein, nein," said Thorstein, and nodded several times, but that was as far as his German went, and he looked a bit helpless.

Otto came serenely over the deck.

"One of the old swine has died," he said curtly. "I've given these chaps orders to take him ashore."

"Jawohl, Herr Offizier," said the mate, stiffening. (*lit.* Yes, of course, Mr. Officer.) "Though there won't be so few to die after we put out."

"Maybe," said Otto. "But all the same. . . ."

"Oh, of course," said the mate. "You should never start a journey with a corpse in the cargo."

Then he went aft, grinning.

It was only the two sailors looking after the crane that we needed to be afraid of, and they were hard at it the other side of the hatch, and hadn't much time to bother about things that didn't concern them.

I took the empty sack and crept in under the tarpaulin to Marion and while I lay beside her I drew up the sack round her as well as I could, while I tried to explain to her what we were planning.

"The main thing is that you lie still," I said. "Not a movement and not a sound, whatever happens. Lie quite slack."

"O.K.," she said, but I don't think she'd taken in much.

Thorstein and I went over to the two girls.

"We're going ashore now," I said.

The oldest one looked up. It was as if I'd brought her back from somewhere miles away. She bent over the old man and kissed him on the forehead; then she turned away and took her sister in her arms again.

We lifted the dead man up. He was tall and amazingly thin, and weighed next to nothing. We laid him in the sack on top of Marion. His head hung outside. Thorstein took off his belt and tied it round the mouth of the sack and round the corpse's neck. There wasn't a trace of Marion to be seen, but the sack was a bit too bulky, and it wouldn't have been too good if any one had looked closely at it.

"Also los," said Otto. (Off we go, then.)

He walked stiffly and arrogantly in front of us towards the gangway.

Thorstein and I followed with the sack, and I can't deny my heart was beating fit to burst my chest. People got out of Otto's way and look inquisitively at our burden.

When we got to the gangway Otto went abruptly and silently past the guard and the tubby mate, and had already got his hand on the railing when the man with the shark jaw and the Tyrolean hat said:

"And what have we here, Herr Sturmbannfuhrer?"

Otto stopped and looked up in surprise, as though he hadn't noticed the man till now.

"Ah, good morning, Herr Doktor," he said, and I must admit I was quite impressed. He'd got just the right tone. Respectful, but at the same time a bit condescending, just as an officer ought to address a civilian.

"One of these miserable swine has kicked the bucket, and we're taking him ashore."

"Oh, indeed?" said Shark-jaw, and gave an evil grin. "That's rather unnecessary, isn't it? He can just as well be thrown overboard when the ship's got out into the fjord."

I envied Thorstein his ignorance of German. For my part I turned cold all over, and thought: Now we're in the soup.

"I can't agree with you, Herr Doktor," said Otto coldly. "The sea has been the grave of so many good Germans that I think it would be sacrilege to defile it with the corpse of a filthy Jew."

The mate clapped his hands and said:

"Quite right, Herr Offizier!"

Shark-jaw smiled a bit sourly and looked at the corpse. Then he hit it over the nose with his gloves, and said:

"Oh, well, it's all one to me. Perhaps you're a bit sentimental by nature, Herr Sturmbannfuhrer?"

Otto saluted and stepped to one side. Thorstein and I came out on to the gangway with the sack.

"I recognize your face so well, Herr Sturmbannfuhrer," said Shark-jaw sweetly. "Where was it, now, that we met?"

I shuddered, but Otto replied with sublime calm:

"In Berlin, Herr Doktor. At a proclamation in the Sportpalast."

"Ah, yes, of course," said Shark-jaw. "I hope we'll meet again soon, Herr Sturmbannfuhrer."

"I hope so too," said Otto.

And then we walked over the quay and through the shed, out the other side, over to the car. It takes precious little time to describe it, but the minutes felt like hours at the time, and I knew the reaction was on its way. I had a belly-ache and felt a wild desire to drop my end of the sack and run for dear life.

Otto didn't look at us. He went past the car and out through the entrance, and disappeared.

Thorstein and I heaved the sack under the tarpaulin, and I whispered:

"Lie still, Marion."

And then I only know that Thorstein stepped on the gas and we were roaring along through the streets. I leaned back in my seat and laughed long and hysterically, and Thorstein said:

"Oh, shut your face. Otherwise I'll sock you one."

"Do," I said. "Do, for God's sake."

And so he did.

X

THORSTEIN drove straight to the garage, and Marion had to lie there the whole of that long day. I don't suppose it was any too comfortable for her, but to move her before dark was out of the question.

Thorstein sat with her, and afterwards he told us that she'd been feverish and babbled a whole lot.

As for me, I got off the clothes I'd had on in the morning and met Petter at The Palms. We had to be there as usual in case any one started getting ideas.

While I sat at the bar waiting for her I thought that everything had gone off splendidly, and I reckoned out that there

was perhaps one chance in a thousand of any one suspecting me of anything to do with the business. It was physically impossible to imagine that the soaker sitting here waiting for a drink in a six-hundred-crown suit could have carried ashore a prisoner from the *Donau* before breakfast.

"You don't half look pleased with yourself, Iben," said Jacob. He'd suddenly popped up beside me. You never know where Jacob comes from. "Had fun last night, perhaps?"

"I always have fun," I said.

"Nifty little piece you've got hold of again," he said, with an approving nod.

"Oh, she'll do."

"Very nice to love, I should think."

I'd gladly have wrung his neck, but I smiled and said:

"What do *you* think?"

And then I saw Petter coming through the door, and I said:

"Cheeroh, Jacob; sorry you've got to go so soon."

He didn't like that and looked quite indignant, but he got up.

"Why can't you introduce me?" he said.

"I wonder," I said.

He shrugged his shoulders and disappeared. I thought: If that gentleman dared, he could turn quite nasty.

Petter was smiling. I could see she was happy. She sat down and squeezed my hand hard, without saying a word.

"Petter, I love you," I said.

She smiled and pursed her lips as though she were contemplating kissing me.

"Same old tale," she said.

"Always," I said.

"I met Otto. He said it had come off all right."

"I'm jealous of Otto," I said. "You're *always* meeting him."

She smiled again, and leant hastily over the table, and just brushed my wrist with her lips. It sounds funny, I've no doubt, but I felt my whole inside surge, and I sighed:

"You mustn't do that," I said. "Not in public. I'll go mad."

"I'll never do it again," she said.

"You dam' well will!" I said. And then we both laughed.

Idiotic, I grant you, but it felt as though we'd emerged from an oppressive darkness. It wasn't till now that I realized how ghastly these days had been, and how remarkable it was that we'd pulled the thing off.

"I'll be bringing Marion along this evening," she said.

"Fine," I said. "I'll have the doctor there. She's had an infernal time."

Then I suddenly remembered something.

"The old Jew," I said.

"That's been seen to," said Petter. "He's to be buried to-morrow, as decently as we can manage. Don't think about that any more."

"Is an undertaking business included in your organisation too?" I said.

"Naturally. I often have a feeling that that's what we need most."

The clock struck three. Ola came with the drinks, and we raised our glasses and drank to one another. I looked into her eyes, and it seemed to me there was something there I hadn't seen before. I was happy.

I sat in the living-room waiting, while the doctor was in with her. Petter was helping him. I had a whisky and soda on the table and bedroom slippers on my feet. Everything was as it should be, and I thought that at last there was some point in existence. For my part, I thought I'd done a pretty good day's work, and my flat was at last being useful in the way flats should be useful nowadays. Reporting centre, headquarter, hotel for birds of passage, with bar and restaurant, and now finally a hospital. Great.

The doctor and Petter came out, and he sat down and had a whisky. He was a young man I knew slightly from the rowing-club, and I knew he was safe.

"How is she?" I asked.

"Thanks," he said bitterly. "She's got concussion and a nasty-looking injury in her stomach from a kick. Her left arm is broken in three places, and three ribs are fractured. Otherwise there's nothing wrong with her at all—except for a few whip-marks on her body, and a bruise or so on the face."

He emptied his glass and put it down hard.

"I always knew they were swine," he said.

Petter was a bit restless. She walked up and down across the floor, and all at once she stopped in front of him.

"Doctor," she said. "It'll probably be as well for all parties if you forget this visit."

He waved his hand soothingly.

"I get you," he said. "But you can bet your bottom dollar I never shall forget it."

He refused another whisky and put on his coat.

"I must go," he said. "Give me a ring if she gets worse, but I think she'll pull through all right."

We both saw him out, and he stopped with his hand on the door-knob.

"If you really want to know," he said, "she ought to be in hospital."

"She'll be in the biggest one in Stockholm within two days," said Petter.

He grinned.

Then we went in to her. She was lying on her stomach in the bed, and laughed gaily.

I grinned back at her. It's a fact, she was positively sweet, in spite of her swollen face, and I thought: They don't get her down as easily as all that.

"Thanks for everything," she said. "I'm fine. It's been a pretty exhausting day, though."

I got a bit damp about the eyes, and I sat down on the edge of the bed and patted her shoulder.

"Handle With Care!" she said. "I'm a bit fragile just now."

"Was it very awful in that sack?" I said.

"Well, there's awful and awful," she smiled bravely. "But you managed to pull it off. That's the main thing!"

"Now you must go to sleep," I said, and switched off the light.

Petter gave me such a funny look when we came into the sitting-room again. She sat down on the sofa and said: "Give me a drink, Iben. I wonder . . ."

"What do you wonder?"

"If I'm not a bit jealous of Marion."

She put her arm round my neck and pulled my head down to her.

I stood over her with the full glass in my hand, and split it on her dress. Then she kissed me. And pushed me away again.

"And that's all there is to that," she said. "You're still a detestable type."

I woke up in a simply marvellous mood and lay on my back for a while, smiling to myself. I thought of Petter, who was probably still asleep on the sofa in the sitting-room, and I was glad she was there. Yes, believe it or not, I was glad she was in there and not here beside me. Yesterday evening I hadn't been quite so lyrical about it; to tell the truth, I'd been pretty peeved and brought out all the arguments a chap usually resorts to in such situations.

I laughed aloud to myself, and thought that I must have changed quite a bit. The door between us wasn't locked, and there were only a few steps dividing us, yet here lay I, and there lay Petter. *And* I was glad about it. She had kissed me, and that was all. We hadn't got an inch further, but all the same I had a feeling we'd gone quite a long way, and that there was hope, and that I was even a bit more in love with her to-day than yesterday, just because I was forced to let her lie in peace on the sofa in the sitting-room. She was, once and for all, that sort of person, and that was O.K.

I put on my dressing-gown and opened the door carefully, but there was no one in the room, and the bed-clothes had gone from the sofa. She was in the kitchen making coffee.

"Morning, Petter," I said.

"Morning," she said. "What a disgusting lot of eggs you've got."

"You bet," I said. "And not a bad ham. Oh, and by the way, I love you."

"So you do," she said. "Where do you keep your frying-pan?"

"In the cupboard to the left there. If anything, still more than yesterday."

"And the butter?"

I got out the butter for her and kissed her on the neck. And then I went into the bathroom and sang "My Old Kentucky Home" while I had a shower. When I came out the flat was full of the smell of the most magnificent breakfast, and I slipped out and fetched the newspaper from the door mat, to have something to light the fire with. On the first page there was quite a good photo of Marion and a heavy black headline:

50,000 CROWNS REWARD

Secret Service Agent Wanted by Sicherheitspolizei¹

"Look, Petter," I said.

She came in from the Kitchen with the eggs and bacon, and looked over my shoulder at the headlines.

"Do you like your eggs hard?" she asked.

"Yes," I said. "How's Marion?"

"Not too bad. I had to get up in the night and give her a shot of morphia; she was in quite a lot of pain. Now she's asleep. Taste good?"

¹ Security Police.

"Wonderful," I said. "Will you marry me?"

"Not to-day," she said. "Coffee?"

"Thanks. If you'd care to some day, let me know."

"All right. They seem to be pretty keen on getting hold of Marion."

"Seems so. I'm proud of having such a famous person in the flat."

"We must get her out of here as soon as possible. They aren't complete fools, and fifty thousand's a lot of money."

The telephone rang and I answered. I heard at once it was Olaf, but what he had to say sounded pretty potty.

"This is the Central Garage. I don't think we can recommend that green colour for your car. It won't look well."

"Don't you think so?" I said.

"No. I should strongly advise you against it. We've another number here which is far more suitable."

"Number?"

"Yes. Isn't that Mr. Anderson, 63457?"

"No," I said, getting more and more fogged. "This is—"

"Must be the wrong number," he said, and hung up.

I scratched my head and reported the conversation to Petter. She laughed.

"Thorstein must paint his lorry another colour and get a new number," she said. "They've obviously got a pretty close description of it."

"Then they've got descriptions of us, too."

"That remains to be seen," she said. "Otto and Thorstein and you shouldn't be seen about together for a bit, anyway."

I drank my coffee, leaned back in the sofa, and lit a cigarette.

Obviously, things were beginning to look dangerous. I remembered Shark-jaw's face, and gave a shiver.

"Who is that Hahn we met on the *Donau*?"

Petter took a cigarette and crept up beside me on the sofa.

I immediately forgot what I'd been asking. She was incredibly sweet, and she'd got a little smut from the frying-pan on her nose. I put my arm round her shoulders and said:

"You must excuse me, but I can't help myself."

"That's all right," she said. "I like it. Dr. Felix Hahn is far and away the best brain in the Gestapo. He's a lover of flowers and plays Beethoven beautifully. And he's a devil through and through. He's a swine about women, and a master of refined torture, and we've often wondered if he hasn't been alive a bit too long."

I nodded. I could see the fellow quite vividly, and I could

think of quite a few things that would be preferable to getting into his clutches.

"How do you know all that? About the flowers and Beethoven?"

"Because he used to send me flowers, and because he once played Beethoven to me."

I took her by the shoulders and shook her. Afterwards I've often thought that it wasn't so much because he was German and a swine as because he was a man and I was jealous.

In any case, I was annoyed.

"What in hell are you saying?"

"Let go. You're hurting."

She pushed me away, and looked at me with big frightened eyes, while she rubbed her arms.

"You're a bit too strong," she said.

"Sorry," I said. "It was just that I got so angry." She gave a sudden smile and came closer again, and then she ruffled my hair and kissed me swiftly on one eye.

"I'm glad you got angry," she whispered. "Though you've no right to."

She pulled my head down into her lap and sat and played with my ears. I laid up my legs on the sofa and was in clover. And then she began to speak:

"You must lie still and shut your eyes and not say anything," she said. "For this is a pretty unpleasant story, and I don't like telling it. I don't like to think about it at all. I had a sister, you see; she was two years younger than I, and we were fearfully fond of one another. Then she married and went to Trondheim, and when the Germans came she and her husband began to do a lot of queer things they didn't care for so much. And at last something went wrong, and they both got caught and were sent to Oslo, where that Hahn took the thing up. There were no proofs, and neither of them admitted anything, so they had a pretty bad time. Well, you've seen Marion. It was grilling day and night, dark cells and night cells and all the fiendish tricks they could think of. Then I went to Dr. Hahn."

She stopped. I raised one eyelid a fraction and saw she'd turned very pale and was sitting there biting her lip. I didn't say anything, and she went on:

"I couldn't just sit back and let things happen—I had to do something. Oh well, he was attracted to me, there was no doubt about that. He—— Well, that was when he sent flowers and played Beethoven."

She was silent again, and I lay breathing heavily, and felt how my hands clenched themselves in the pockets of my dressing-gown. I said nothing.

"Well, that was all there was to it," she said, and her voice had become strangely hard. "I would have done anything for Ingrid."

"Anything?" I said.

"Yes. I know what you mean. That, too, if it would have been any good. But nothing was any good. I knew that. He's as cold as ice. He's diabolical. He kept me hanging on with half promises, and hinted that it rested with me whether he did anything or not. And then one day he told me quite casually that Ingrid was dead."

She stubbed out her cigarette in the ash-tray and lit a new one before going on.

"I asked to see her. He answered that he didn't think I'd better. 'I think you'd rather remember her as she was,' he said. 'You might find her a bit changed.' Afterwards I heard from her husband just how changed she was."

"Her husband?" I said.

"There were no proofs," she said. "And at last they let him go. That's another of those things about the Germans that are so difficult to understand. They quite simply let him go—I suppose they thought he was completely done for—and he certainly looked it. He told me they'd let him see her. Two days before her death—through a pane of glass. He said that her hair was quite white. She was twenty-two."

My temples were pounding, and I felt how I'd set my jaw so hard that it ached. I saw she was going through everything again; her face seemed turned to stone, as it must have done that time when she learnt all about this.

"And her husband?" I said, in a low voice.

"You know him," she said. "It's Otto."

Otto. Of course. I saw the gaunt, fanatical face in front of me. A mask concealing infinite suffering and an abyss of hate. I remembered the almost crazed savagery in his voice on board the *Donau*, and thought of the times I'd seen his face contract in pain, as if he were thinking of things not to be borne.

And then I remembered the last minute on the gangway and Shark-jaw's words: I remember your face so well, Herr Sturmbannfuhrer.

"But think if Hahn recognizes him and remembers where it really was they met," I said.

She shook her head.

"Otto's changed a lot," she said. "It isn't only his name that's different. His whole self has changed. It's as if the old Otto died then, and a completely new person was born instead."

She smiled bitterly.

"And then, you see, it isn't so easy for an executioner with as much to do as Hahn has to keep all his victims apart."

She got up and began to clear off the plates.

"I'll just wash these up," she said. "You read the newspaper while I do it."

I'd let old Christina have a holiday. Not because I couldn't trust her, but because it might be dangerous for her one fine day to know too much about the visitors who were in and out of this house.

"Can't I help you?"

"I'd rather do it alone."

I looked at her. Her eyes were full of tears. I realized there were some things I couldn't help her with.

"Just as you say," I said.

The paper wasn't particularly encouraging, and if one hadn't known that everything in it was a lie, one might well have lost courage. The Germans were bearing down everything before them in their advance on the Eastern Front, and Rommel seemed to be doing just what he liked with dear old Montgomery in Africa, while ship after ship was sunk in the Atlantic, and the Americans had practically nothing to eat any longer. A bad look-out for every one except Goebbels, who now saw victory round the next corner.

There was a ring at the door, and I was glad of an excuse to throw the paper in the fire.

It was Jacob.

He wasn't just the visitor I'd have chosen, and I'm afraid he saw it. He gave a most amiable smile and said:

"Excuse me for disturbing you."

I felt a bit ashamed. After all, Jacob and I had been friends quite a time, and he'd done quite a bit for me. Not that it didn't pay him pretty well, but all the same. . . . And as a matter of fact it was only quite recently that I'd begun not to like him. In earlier days we'd often sat tippling together, and at bottom he wasn't any worse than most.

I smiled.

"Not at all," I said. "Nice to see you."

"I was passing," he said. "And then I happened to remember that I've got an unusually fine lot of brandy . . ."

"That was thoughtful of you," I said. "But to tell you the truth, I'm beginning to think all this black market business is pretty foul. I mean, it isn't quite right for me to sit here and be able to get what I want while people in the town are practically starving."

He laughed, and I couldn't help thinking he was rather a nasty piece of work. He stood leaning against the door of the lift, irritatingly elegant in a brown overcoat and a jaunty grey Stetson hat.

"Beginning to have scruples, eh? But can't we sit down and talk things over?"

Well, that wasn't quite so suitable, either. I said:

"Unfortunately, I haven't got time just now, Jacob."

"Aha," he said, and the foxy smile spread from ear to ear.

"You've been having fun last night too, eh?"

I began to boil inside, but I thought it was best to play up to him, so I gave him a wink and said:

"One's got to amuse oneself somehow."

"Well, surely that needn't stop me coming in," he said. "I'm discretion itself."

"She's a bit shy," I said. "She wouldn't like it."

Just then I heard Marion calling from the guest-room. And then I heard Petter come out of the kitchen and answer from the sitting-room:

"I'm coming now, Marion."

Jacob cocked his head and smiled knowingly at me.

"Two of 'em," he said. "I don't understand how you do it."

"We'll be seeing one another at The Palms to-day," I said. "We could discuss our business then."

"He didn't budge, and I began slowly closing the door."

"You might pass one of 'em on to me," he said. "Was it Marion her name was?"

"I'll be seeing you," I said. "Good-bye for the present."

"Do I know—Marion?"

"I don't think so. Cheeroh!"

I shut the door and wasn't too happy. It was probably all right and no harm done, but all the same I had a vague feeling that perhaps it *wasn't* so all right, after all.

Anyway, I forgot the whole thing for a bit when I went in to see Marion. Petter was sitting on the side of the bed feeding her carefully, and it looked as though she'd pick up again. But she was pretty pale, and when I came in she stopped eating and looked at me rather desperately.

"There's something you must help me with," she said.

"I've been a donkey, and it begins to dawn on me that I ought to have taken a job as a children's nurse rather than as a spy."

"It's not too late yet," I said. "You'll be sweet as a children's nurse."

"I suppose you can't begin to understand how I could go up to my flat that morning," she went on. "But there was something I'd forgotten. When I got the warning that they were probably coming that night, I naturally went through all my cubby-holes and cleared everything out, and there wasn't a little of it, either. I was nervous and pretty frightened. Then I came here, but in the middle of the night I suddenly woke up and remembered I'd left a small but jolly important thing behind. I *had* to get hold of it, and I began to think. It might very well be that the warning in the evening was a false alarm, and there was a fifty-fifty chance that my flat was untouched and everything all right. I decided to take the chance, and at seven in the morning I rang up my own number. No one answered. I was pretty relieved at that, and at half-past I went home. I rang a good long time at my own door, but no one came. I thought the coast was clear and unlocked it. And ten minutes later I was sitting in a car with a black eye and blacker prospects."

"What was it that you had to get hold of, actually?" Petter asked.

"A prescription. A chemical formula, written on two sheets of thin tissue paper. I'd got it a few days before from Professor Vetland, and hadn't a chance to send it to England yet. It's complete Greek to ordinary people, but Vetland says he can concoct *the* most terrific explosive from that formula."

"Vetland?" I said. "But he's a Nazi."

"If we only had a few more Nazis like him!" Marion said. "Vetland is all right, but if the Germans get hold of that formula we haven't many prospects of seeing him alive any more. He's joined the Party and he makes simply outrageous speeches at the Industrial Federation, and of course all the right-thinking Norwegians cut him dead. But this means he's been able to keep his post as director of Grafossen, where they're experimenting to find the most amazing explosive history's ever known."

"And that formula is now in your flat?" I said.

"Exactly."

"Or *was*," I said. "They're good at snooping around. Naturally, they've taken everything, and they'll obviously have found it."

"I don't know. I hid it in the toilet-roll in the bath-room. Would you look for important papers there?"

"God knows," I said. "I might, if I were a German. In any case, we must obviously go and see."

"We?" said Petter. "That flat is a rat-trap now. They've taken it over, of course. And after the *Donau* business there's too great a risk of their recognizing you. Let me go."

"Rot," I said. "What can you do? The job's made for Gingernuts."

She looked at me, and I thought I could see a new, rather surprised interest in her eye. I was surprised myself. I had spoken with authority, and that was quite a departure for me.

XI

IN MANY WAYS a dead hand seems to lie heavy on Oslo now-a-days, and in the quiet streets towards the West End in particular, it seems on a dull autumn day like this as though the people had crawled in behind their blinds and committed suicide. Thomas Hefty Street has never been a specially lively sight, and now less than ever. It's a street for well-to-do people, who live respectable lives and enjoy their after-dinner nap, a street with many old genteel houses and a few elegant new blocks of flats with functionalist balconies and a roof garden.

On this certain afternoon the street was more dead than ever, and it was pretty dark already, although it was only five o'clock. The cold wet autumn mist floated in from the sea, and the gloomy drizzle helped to drive people indoors. On a day like this a town in the black-out seems more unendurable than usual. After all, in the summer one doesn't need light, and in the winter the snow helps quite a lot, but an autumn afternoon like this sticks in one's memory like a sorrow, with its grey twilight, its faint blue lamps on the corners, and the melancholy howls from the fog sirens down by the harbour.

Two sweeps walked up the slope and turned down Thomas Hefty Street.

It was almost impossible to see their black forms in the darkness. Over their shoulders they carried long brushes rolled up like wheels, on their heads they had black caps, and it wasn't easy to see what their faces really were like, so ingrained were they with soot from the chimneys.

During the last few years Oslo has burnt up her woods, and it's been, if not snug exactly, at least inhabitable. But

the wet wood-smoke still hangs over the towns, and the flues get incrustated with all the soot the wood produces. So the sweep has become a familiar figure in the life of the town. There are people who pigheadedly maintain that a sweep means luck. All one can say to that is that one meets sweeps all the time in Oslo nowadays, but one never has any luck.

"Wasn't a bad idea, this," I said. "No one notices us, and it's quite an effective disguise for nothing."

Gingernuts grunted. He'd changed in the last half-hour. Short and businesslike and a bit cantankerous. I understood that he was thinking hard, and that at the moment he knew as little as I what we were going to do.

It had quite a different effect on me. I had a funny light feeling in my head, rather as if I were a bit drunk, and I also felt an inexplicable need to laugh at everything. Of course it was only a kind of nervousness, but it was quite agreeable, all the same. I wasn't in the least frightened, for funnily enough I felt quite safe inside this sweep. I was a completely new person, whom it would never occur to any one to connect with the fellow who had been having cocktails at The Palms at three o'clock as usual.

Number 23 was a new, smart six-story building, and Marion's flat was at the very top. We padded through the elegant lobby and into the lift, and I began to laugh. Gingernut's face stared at me from the two mirrors in the lift, and he looked marvellous. I bet he was the kind of sweep mothers frighten their children with.

"What in the hell are you cackling about?" said Gingernuts, pressing the button.

"Look for yourself," I said. He reviewed himself, and then *he* began to laugh.

"This is fun," he said. "I'm beginning to warm to it."

"What shall we do?" I asked.

"Time will show. You can use your head, and I'll take this." He waved a mitt the size of a young ham.

We got to the top. I had a lump in my throat when we stopped outside the door of Marion's flat, and I drew a deep breath.

"Nervy?" asked Gingernuts.

"A bit," I said. "Get going."

He rang the bell. We waited a little, and all I could hear was my heart beating a little too fast and much too loudly. And then we heard steps inside, and I thought in relief that at any rate those weren't soldier's boots. The steps were rather shuffling, I might almost say congenial.

Then the door was flung wide, and we looked into a round, smiling, and pretty soppy face.

The man was a German ; I could see that from the fencing scar right across his chin. But otherwise there wasn't anything very impressive about him. In uniform, corsets, riding-boots and Iron Cross, he might have cut a good figure, but not in his plum-coloured dressing-gown, which looked as though it was all he had on. He was much too plump, and light-red down grew out of his chest, and he had a rather fatuous little tuft of the same make under his nose. His smile vanished as soon as he saw us. It was plain he'd been expecting quite a different visitor, and he thought we were a bit of an anti-climax.

"What the devil . . . ?" he said, in the Kultur lingo.

"Wir soll feien" (We've come to sweep), said Gingernuts, in more or less the same language, and it looked as though he were simply going to walk in.

The fat fellow's eye registered something not unlike panic, and he flung out his arms.

"No, no ! Not convenient," he said, in broken Norwegian. "Not to-day. Another day."

Gingernuts smiled as a professional always smiles at childish objection.

"Heute nacht oder nie." (To-night or never), he said, quoting a film placard with bravado. "Otherwise you'll have the house full of smoke."

I thought I'd put my oar in, too and said :

"Wir haben ORDER su fegen." (We've got ORDERS to sweep.)

It was obvious the fat chap didn't quite know what he was meant to do, and I wouldn't hold that against him. There is a lot to be said for living in a country like the Third Reich, but they have to knuckle under now and then. If a man from some government office or other turns up in the middle of the night with orders to weigh and measure one's wife in the nude, there isn't much else to do than say, Bitte, eintreten (Please walk in), and look pleasant. The same applies to sweeps, I imagine. He stood there teetering on his bare toes, and I noticed that a little water was dripping off him at the bottom, and I wondered where on earth it came from. It was plain he was very hesitant, and I already half expected him to fling up the sponge and let us get down to it. But then he pulled himself together and evidently remembered he was in a conquered country and was, in point of fact, the master of the house.

"Ab !" (*lit* Off !), he said, and pointed dictatorially towards the corridor. "Get out. At once."

"All right, mister," said Gingernuts. His right hand shot out like a crow-bar, and our amiable host hit the back of his head hard against the side of the door, and collapsed like a sack of potatoes.

"Quick, now!" said Gingernuts, and pulled the man inside with him. The next moment we'd shut the door and were drawing a deep breath in the hall.

"Heavy little porker," said Gingernuts, shoving the body into the wardrobe, while I slowly and cautiously opened the door of the sitting-room and looked in, with my hand on the pistol in my trouser pocket. There was no one there, but it looked pretty snug and thoroughly occupied. There was a cheerful fire in the fireplace, and on the table in front of the fire was a cocktail-shaker and two very promising-looking bottles. And two glasses, with a little in them.

"Quiet, Gingernuts," I whispered. "There's at least one other person here."

"O.K.," he said with a grin. "We'll take them in turn. Don't push. Every one will be served."

He was obviously in uproarious spirits, and it was infectious.

He opened the door, and I had to put my hand in front of my mouth not to burst out laughing. The cupboard was so narrow that it really fitted our pink friend like a glove, and you couldn't have got in a bamboo cane beside him. He stood quite perpendicular like a pharaoh in a mummy-case, and Gingernuts had hung him up by a hook in the loop of his dressing-gown, to be on the safe side. This had in its turn caused a slight displacement in his dress, so he looked a bit risqué.

"He won't wake up yet awhile," said Gingernuts, shutting the door. "God knows if he ever will, for that matter."

We stole into the sitting-room, and Gingernuts gave a broad grin at the sight of the drinks.

"Gosh," he whispered. "The chap's the world's best host."

"Wait a bit," I said softly. "We must find the other one first."

I looked round and discovered the dining-alcove, which was hidden behind a kind of half-wall. The table was laid for six, and there were a whole lot of delicious things there that one has to be German to get hold of nowadays. Among other things it looked as though the chap had ordered pretty well half a pig, and there was quite a lot of liquid matter to make it go down easier. In the middle of the table there was one of those cakes that children have dreamt of in vain since April,

1940. It was decorated with a swastika flag, and had the inscription *Dreimal Hoch Fritzchen!* (Three cheers for Fred!)

"Our host's having a birthday," I whispered. "And he's expecting guests. We'd better look snappy."

"We've plenty of time," said Gingernuts, and calmly drank off a large cocktail. "Why, he was stark naked. He was getting togged up, and he certainly don't expect 'em before six."

The flat reminded me very much of my own and I had no difficulty in finding the bathroom. I opened the door and went in, and then a woman's voice said just beside me:

"Na, da bist du endlich, Fritzchen." (Well, here you are at last, Freddie.)

Naturally I jumped. You'd have jumped, too. Then I stared, and it would surprise me if you hadn't followed my example in that item, also.

The woman was in the bath. She lay on her belly in the water, propping her chin on a cushion placed on the edge of the tub. She was eating chocolates from a box on the seat beside her.

I said:

"Hoochy-coochy!"

Now *she* was the one to jump. She did a complete right-about in the tub so that a whole lot of water splashed up on me, and then she covered her face with her hands and said:

"Mein Gott!" (My God!)

And well she might. I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror, and understood how she felt. Here was one peacefully doing a little mixed bathing with a pale-pink S.S. cherub, and lo and behold! the idyll is rudely shattered and the devil himself in full panoply stands in the bathroom, muttering Hoochy-coochy.

I've always been against those authors who interrupt the story just when it's beginning to be, if not exciting, at any rate relatively readable, in order to indulge in a bit of nature-worship. But it's a fact that that's what I did now. I forgot I hadn't much time, and took a good look, and I must say I've seen many worse sights. Otherwise, women stamped Made in Germany make no immediate appeal to me. There's a bit too much of the Gretchen with plaits and woollen stockings about them for my taste.

But this number in the bath was a decided exception. She had black hair and eyes flashing like 'way down Rio. Her mouth was gaping with terror, but looked all right, all the

same, and there was class and breed in her neck and her shoulders and her . . .

Oh well, I won't lose myself in details, but she was the goods, and Gingernuts, who came into the bathroom just at that moment, remained as if rooted to the threshold. I thought: Now we've all got our mouths open. So I closed mine.

Gingernuts whistled softly. Then he gave a broad grin and mumbled:

"What did I say? The best host in the world."

The lady in the bath looked as though she were getting back a little strength, and she seemed to have given up the theory we were devils. She began to look pretty indignant, and I foresaw a pretty penetrating screech before long, so I said:

"Maul halted, Fräulein." (Hold your noise, Miss.)

She understood that perfectly well, but she paid no heed to it. She began to say a lot of things, and I thought: Everything in the garden's lovely as long as she doesn't yell. And to tell the truth it was fun to listen to it. I've had good sport in Sao Paulo in my time, and this called up old memories. I don't think there was a single word she didn't manage to get in, and some of the strongest were of a kind to make me blush becomingly, and be glad of all the soot on my face. When she took a short pause for breath, I said in German:

"If your mother had heard you now, miss, I shouldn't wonder if she wouldn't wallop you, big as you are."

I said it quite quietly and politely, but it had a frightful effect. She went flaming red in the face and leapt up out of the tub, and gave vent to a squall that echoed through the pipes. And the next minute along came the sponge and the cake of soap, and a pretty hard nail-brush that caught Gingernuts over the right eye.

He went into action at once, and embraced the lady, and I sat down on the lavatory seat and laughed helplessly.

She was caught in a vice-like grip and couldn't get out more than a mild squeak, and Gingernuts didn't seem to have any objection to keeping to this programme for a hour or more. He lifted her up out of the tub, and they stood there closely entwined in the middle of the floor like a dripping black-and-white study of a mildly pornographic nature.

She mustered all her strength and screeched again, and Gingernuts gave her one on the behind with a colossal hand and said:

"Quiet, my lovely, and I'll give you a kiss."

Whereupon he kissed her. I leaned my head in my hands

and groaned. She was stamped behind with an enormous paw, plainly imprinted in black. I pulled myself together and tied a towel over her mouth, for she kicked quite a bit.

"Arms, too," said Gingernuts. "Fancy she's a good scratcher."

I went into the bedroom and found a suspender-belt. I pulled off the suspenders, and shortly afterwards she lay quite neatly swaddled in a large bath-sheet on the floor, pretty cosy in the circumstances.

"That was fun," said Gingernuts. "We'll do it again some time."

I went in and took down the toilet-paper roll from the wall. I fished out the cardboard cylinder from inside, and peeped into it. There was nothing there.

"It's gone, Gingernuts," I said.

He scratched his head and looked at the cylinder.

"Perhaps those swine finished the paper and threw the roll away, and put another one there."

It was a possibility, of course. I took out my knife and cut the cylinder up, and saw that they had found the formula. Marion had fastened the two thin sheets on to the inside of the cylinder with a little gum, and I saw plain traces of it and the one corner of the tissue paper that was still hanging there.

"They've got it," I said.

"Oh, well," said Gingernuts. "They've got to have a break sometimes."

And it looked as if there was quite a bit of truth in what he said, for just then there was a ring at the door.

"Gawd," said Gingernuts. "That's not too good."

And he was right again there, too. It was anything but good, and I cursed the modern architects who never made more than one entrance to flats. In the old days you could laugh in a lordly way at situations like this, and gaily sneak out of the back door, and there's no doubt that style of building had a favourable effect on the length of marriages. But here there were only two alternatives. We could jump from the roof garden and be picked up with blotting paper from the street afterwards, or else we could go out through the door and land up at No. 19.

"We've got to bluff," said Gingernuts.

I thought that sounded pretty silly, but it can't be denied there wasn't much else to choose. We shut the bathroom door and went into the sitting-room. I crept up to the door and heard them quite plainly outside. They were

talking German, and they obviously had a couple of girls with them. It dawned on me that we'd been dam' stupid, and I remembered one or two things I'd heard and ought to have thought of before. Gingernuts had assumed we'd plenty of time because our pink friend hadn't got anything on, but now I remembered that Germans prefer to be that way when they celebrate their birthday with brandy and girls. It's a gala costume with national traditions in the S.S., and it must be a grand sight.

I went into the sitting-room again, and by this time I was so nervous I was shaking all over, and I thought: In a minute you'll get hysterical and begin to blub. They were ringing like fury now, and one of them began banging on the door and bawling:

"Fritzchen! Menschenskind! Aufmachen!" (Freddie! Man alive! Open!)

Gingernuts had unrolled his long, brush and put it on the mantelpiece. He'd already poured a lot of water over the fire, and it was smoking like fun. He smiled soothingly at me, and said:

"Half a mo; then you can open the door. Let me do the talking."

He worked quickly, spread a few newspapers on the floor quick as lightning, and arranged his tackle neatly round the fireplace, so that it all looked very natural. He seemed so professional that I almost began to believe in the story myself: we really were two honest sweeps doing our sweepish duty, and even if there was a bit of smoke just for the moment, there'd be such an incredible improvement when we'd done.

"I see what you mean," I said.

"Well, open the door and look pleasant then," he said.

I wobbled at the knees a bit when I saw the company, and so would you. One of the chaps looked dangerous enough; he was over six feet tall and his left eye looked far larger than life because he wore a monocle like a magnifying glass. His uniform was awe-inspiring too, with skulls here and there, and an Iron Cross with sword and oak leaves on his breast. But even so, it wasn't him I was looking at, for behind him, in a mackintosh and Tyrolean hat, and with an amiable shark smile that slowly died away as he saw me, stood Dr. Felix Hahn, the best brain in the Gestapo.

XII

"WHAT's the meaning of this?"

He spoke Norwegian without a trace of accent. If he'd looked a bit more human you might well have taken him for an Oslo citizen. He assumed command with a self-evidence that was impressive, and the tall fellow with the Iron Cross didn't say anything at all.

Hahn pushed me on one side without even looking at me. It didn't seem as though he expected an answer. He walked straight in, threw open the door of the sitting-room, and stopped a moment on the threshold without saying anything. The two girls crowded forward behind him and looked over his shoulder, and then they burst out laughing.

"Ruhe, bitte." (Quiet, please), said Hahn, without turning round. His voice was cold as ice, and their laughter stuck in their throats. My heart was beating so hard I felt they must hear it.

He took out his cigarette-case and a long black holder, and lit a cigarette. He didn't take his eyes off Gingernuts for a second. I craned my neck and got a glimpse of Gingernuts in the room. He was sitting on the fender, and had pushed his long brush up the flue. It was now that he seemed to notice the man in the doorway; he turned his head and gave him a friendly and confident smile.

"'Afternoon," he said.

"What are you doing here?" asked Hahn. He spoke softly and there was nothing threatening in his voice, but still it sent cold shivers all the way down my back.

"You can see, can't you?" said Gingernuts. "We're sweeping the chimney. And not a minute too soon, either. Come here and give us a hand, Charlie."

I went into the sitting-room. As I walked past Hahn I felt fear seize me like a clammy hand in the small of my back. I forced myself to go straight up to the fireplace without looking at him, and I took my brush and began to poke about in the flue beside Gingernuts.

"Nothing very wrong here," he said out loud; I realized he didn't mean the flue, but said it to give me courage.

"That's right," I said. "It'll soon be done now."

Gingernuts pulled down his broom, and a whole avalanche of soot came hurtling down after it. He turned to Hahn and smiled.

"Rotten bad luck getting a choked flue just when guests are expected," he said. "But we'll be ready in a minute, now."

The tall officer with the Iron Cross stuck his nose in and swore in German.

"Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter, what smoke!" Then he vanished again.

"Where is Dr. Pfalzer?" said Hahn.

Gingernuts laughed.

"Why, the gent couldn't breathe here. He took the lady and went down to the bar in Bygdö Avenue. The Bagatelle, it's called."

"What's happened here?"

Gingernuts shook his head and smiled.

"Nothing's happened exactly," he said. "It's only that all this firing with wood blocks up the flues, particularly up here in the top flat, where the soot collects. And this afternoon it fell down and it looked as though the chimney was going to catch fire and I don't know what all, so they phoned for us."

I stood with my head inside the stove, pretending to be working like fury, and I thought Gingernuts was doing his stuff fine. It didn't sound so unlikely at all, and I began to think there might be a chance.

"Do you mean to say Dr. Pfalzer left the flat and let you stay here by yourselves?" said Hahn.

"Looks like it, don't it?" said Gingernuts. "Fact is, he *had* to go out if he didn't want to be choked. That reminds me, he asked me to ask you to go down to the Bagatelle for a bit, and have a drink there. It'll be quite all right again here in half an hour; it only needs a bit of airing now."

My heart nearly stood still, I was so excited. I turned my head a fraction and got a glimpse of Hahn. He came slowly into the room, looking at the fireplace and the cocktail table. He strolled towards the dining-alcove and inspected the arrangements there. I could only see his feet as he walked slowly back to the fireplace again.

"Why did it take so long for you to open the door?" he asked.

"Had you been waiting long?" said Gingernuts. "We had our heads up the flue and didn't hear anything before you started banging."

The feet moved off again. Broad flat feet in brown shoes. They moved purposefully at an eerily leisured rate, and I realized that the owner of them was putting two and two together. Up to now I thought that Gingernuts had got everything to sound pretty plausible. But then I thought

of the chap in the cupboard and the dame in the bath, and didn't feel exactly easy in my mind.

The feet pulled up again just beside the cocktail table. I squatted down and took a hasty look across at Hahn. He was standing with one of the glasses in his hand, twisting it round slowly.

"I gather you're fond of alcohol," he said dryly. "When you steal it's best not to be too black about the fingers."

Now Gingernuts was really hurt.

"Believe me or not," he said. "But I got that drink quite open and above board from the gent before he went away. We aren't the stealing sort, even if we are only the labouring poor." He gave a short laugh. "And anyway, I'm not so fed up with life that I steal from Germans," he said.

That went home. The feet took another turn, and I gradually began to breathe normally again. The whole thing seemed pretty watertight, and Hahn knew as well as we did that Fritzchen might have rolled off and left two sweeps to stay here alone. No one would have dared to steal as much as a bacon rind from this flat. I thought: It's all right, and now how about pushing off?

The feet stopped and Hahn said:

"I don't believe you."

That shook me. Fear is a strange thing—you'll find that out all right if you're ever really frightened. It's just like a solid lump that sticks in your throat and threatens to choke you. I thought what a suspicious devil he was, and that it was a bit rotten the Germans should be like that. They aren't like ordinary people and it simply doesn't occur to them to believe a man because he's got an honest face. I stuck my hand in my pocket and released the safety catch of my gun, and thought that now everything was up, and it was a putrid way to die.

"That's a pity," Gingernuts said dryly, beginning to roll up his brush. "But this is all clear now, anyway, and perhaps we'd better air a bit."

I just couldn't go on standing inside the flue any longer, so I came out and reviewed the situation. Out in the hall stood the tall chap with the girls, waiting without understanding anything, and in the middle of the floor stood Hahn straddling his legs and with an ugly scowl on his face. As soon as I saw him I realized he didn't quite know what to think. All that stuff about not believing us was only half true; it's the sort of things Germans say to see how one reacts.

"Let me see your identity cards," he said briefly.

Gingernuts laughed and shook his head.

"A sweep going up a flue doesn't have anything in his pockets," he said, with mild forbearance. "It's easy enough to catch on something as it is."

I gave an almost audible gasp. This was pretty cool coming from a chap who at that very moment was standing there, with a gun the size of a young cannon in his breast pocket.

And now the remarkable thing was that Hahn began to believe us. If we'd produced our identity cards he'd probably have taken it for granted they were faked, and if Gingernuts had started to swear and protest his innocence, would have arrested us on the spot. But this cool, brazen-faced cheek did the trick. He shrugged his shoulders, and something almost resembling a smile passed over his face.

"Very good," he said. "Air the place and tidy up here."

"Righto, mister," said Gingernuts.

He took the soot-brush out of the strap on his back and got rid of the worst mess in an incredibly short time; then he folded the old newspapers together and stuffed them into the wood-basket.

"There we are," he said. "And now for the smoke."

Hahn nodded. He'd thrown himself into a chair and followed all Gingernuts' movements with his eyes. I began to feel a lot happier in my mind, for it was clear he was practically convinced.

Gingernuts said:

"But then we must put the light out, mustn't we?"

He was quite right, of course. It costs a hundred crowns to show as much as a chink of light in Oslo nowadays, and if we opened the big door to the roof-garden we'd have the house full of police in a twinkling.

Hahn nodded again and switched off the ceiling light. I put out the standard lamp by the fireplace and felt even better. It was glorious to escape Hahn's eyes; they seemed to bore right through one.

Now there was only a faint gleam from the hall.

Gingernuts opened the door to the roof-garden and said:

"We'll have to wait till the gent comes back, Charlie."

"Yes, I suppose we must," I said, but I couldn't see what he was getting at.

"Why?" asked Hahn in the darkness.

"Well, y'see, it'll be 11.50 for the job," said Gingernuts.

I spluttered, but it didn't matter, for it might well have been the smoke, which was going out at a good rate, incidentally. I wanted to laugh, and I thought: He'll pull it off.

I heard Hahn chuckle, and his voice sounded almost friendly when he said :

" You needn't do that. I can pay for Pfalzer."

I put my hand in front of my mouth and spluttered again. Gingernuts said : " That's sporting of you, mister. To tell the truth, it's long after working hours already, and the missis is waiting with the herrings."

Hahn got up and went over to the hall. In the light from the lamp there he took out his vallet and counted out twelve crowns.

" Here you are," he said. " Keep the change."

" Ta," said Gingernuts, stuffing the money into his pocket. " Well, let's go then, Charlie."

I opened the door. My heart was beating madly, but now it was with a sort of wild triumph. I felt I'd like to yodel a bit.

The tall fellow with the Iron Cross walked slowly into the sitting-room with a girl on each arm, and Hahn took off his hat and raincoat and called after them in German :

" It's fairly all right here now. We may just as well stay where we are. Fritz is bound to come soon."

" Suits me," said the Iron Cross.

We were outside. Just as I shut the door I heard Hahn again :

" Take off your things and hang them in this cupboard."

We wasted no unnecessary time. Gingernuts was already on his way at full gallop down the corridor, and he disappeared round the corner like a black streak.

Just as I'd got round the corner myself I heard the door jerked open again, and a gruff voice yelling :

" Stop ! "

Plainly, our pink friend had been discovered.

This only added wings to my feet, and I reached the lift and the staircase in record time. And it was here I did a damfool thing. The Germans had naturally come up in the lift, and they hadn't sent it down again. It was still standing there, and without thinking I tore open the door, hopped in, and pressed the button. And just as Hahn and the tall devil came charging round the corner of the corridor, the lift sank slowly and steadily down into the depths with me.

I threw myself flat on the floor, and they didn't see me. Gingernuts had taken the stairs, of course, and they probably heard him crashing down like a landslide, for they were after him, and I caught a glimpse of them just as I passed the fifth floor. The Iron Cross was leading by a good length with his

revolver in his fist, and Hahn tailed after him in true civilian style. Perhaps feats of physical prowess weren't exactly his forte.

I was in a blue funk and cursed my own stupidity. And in order that the reader should learn something from this, I may just as well say clearly and firmly: When pressed for time, whether it's an irritated husband or the devil himself or a couple of gents from the Security Police who request the pleasure of your company, TAKE THE STAIRS AND SHUN A LIFT LIKE THE PLAGUE. No one knows how quickly you can get down a flight of stairs if you have to. I was still at the third floor when Hahn and his military friend had reached the bottom. And I began to consider the situation seriously. Gingersnaps was probably streaking down the street by this time, and I supposed the two gentlemen were standing at the street door, scratching their noddles a bit forlornly with the barrels of their guns. But then it wouldn't be a particularly wise move on my part to come sailing down in the lift and run straight into their arms. Just as I passed the second floor I took hold of the door and got the lift to stop. I stuck out my head and listened. Silence. I could only hear two voices very faintly, mumbling away down there, and I supposed it was in German but wasn't quite sure.

Something had to be done, but I didn't quite know what. Then I heard Hahn's voice, angry and disgruntled and authoritative:

"Nonsense. No alarm. Don't let's make ourselves ridiculous."

Aha! I thought, and I understood how he felt. It's a rather funny trait of the Master Race that there's such a team spirit among them. They have such a good time together, I mean. If it leaked out to the Gestapo that Hahn had been fooled by two sweeps and had overlooked a pink Doctor of Law hanging up in a cupboard, and a well-wrapped up nymph with fingerprints on her stern in the bathroom, so much sympathy would stream towards him that he'd probably get a free journey home, with perhaps a stay in a convalescent home at the expense of the State thrown in. I grinned.

But I soon stopped that, for I heard them beginning to come up the stairs again. I set the lift going and went up. I thought that my position wasn't too bad. They could hardly know I was still there; they probably assumed that we'd both taken the stairs and were far away by this time.

It was another matter to get out again. I wasn't too keen

about making an appearance in sweep's costume in these parts ;

And while I passed the fourth floor, sunk in these reflections, I made a fool of myself for God knows the whattth time. I was standing upright in the lighted lift, and suddenly I found myself looking straight into the face of one of the German dames.

I'd completely forgotten them. But they didn't seem to have forgotten me.

Her mouth opened in a great red O, and she waved her arms about. I couldn't hear anything where I was, but I understood that quite a bit of noise issued from her. Just as I disappeared from view I saw her pelting off at full speed down the stairs to join the main force.

What was I to do now? I had no particular desire to visit the sixth floor again, and the lift wasn't going to be a particularly salubrious place during the immediate future. I stopped at the fifth floor, jumped out, and sent the lift down again, and then I stood there jittering without the foggiest idea what I was going to do. I could hear them underneath me now; they'd already got to the fourth floor, and just then the lift passed them on its way down.

I heard Hahn :

" It's empty."

And then—God be praised for all the stupid females in the world ! :

" No, no, I saw him. He's lying on the floor ! "

Her voice rose to falsetto in her excitement, and I thought (as I'd often done before) : German isn't a language, it's merely an unharmonious way of making oneself understood.

Then I heard them charging down the stairs again, and for my part I ran like a hare through the corridor, round corners and past thousands of doors in completely mad panic. It may very well be that I sound pretty valiant now, while I'm telling it, but there wasn't much of the lionheart about me while I was in the thick of it, and if any one had said an unkind word to me just then, I should have fallen down dead of a heart attack.

And then I was checked in my wild career. The corridor quite simply came to an end. It finished up in a wall, and in the wall there was a door, but no possible exit to be seen anywhere. I didn't stop to thiak, and I'm not even sure I knew what I was doing. My finger found the button of the bell as though by itself.

X I I I

WHEN the door opened I only gave myself time to see that it was a woman who was standing there. Then I shoved her aside and ran in and shut the door, and then I said :

" Please don't scream, ma'am ; there's no danger."

I'd obviously shoved just a bit too hard in my zeal, for she was sitting on the umbrella-stand, and I thought that all these open mouths were beginning to be a bit monotonous. But strictly speaking, it wasn't so surprising. I still looked fit to scare the devil, and there is something quite specially unexpected about a sweep when one hasn't exactly sent for him, if you see what I mean.

Anyway, she didn't scream. She just sat there with round eyes, and then she pulled herself together and got up and squeezed out a shaky smile, which said something like : " Take the silver, but spare me."

I gave another broad and conciliating smile and said :

" I know I look a menace, but I'm really quite a decent chap, and you've no call to be afraid."

She said :

" I'm not afraid."

But it didn't sound specially convincing.

She might have been a bit over thirty, and wasn't bad-looking, as far as that goes. A bit too round on top, and with a bit too thin legs underneath, but on the whole passable. She had chestnut brown hair which was cut a great deal too short, and her face was pretty but with rather flabby features, and I thought she was in for an extra chin in a year or two. Her eyes were the best things about her ; they were blue and rather beautiful, but stupid.

" What are you doing here ? " she asked.

" I'll explain everything in a jiffy," I said. " Just let me get my breath."

She looked closely at me, and I was glad she took it as calmly as she did. It didn't look as though she found me so alarming. She smiled again, and this time she made a better job of it, and I saw that she had good teeth and could be quite a tempting morsel to those who liked that type.

" Won't you come in ? " she said.

She followed me into the sitting-room. Neat and not much taste, with the kind of furniture you always find in modern flats nowadays. Wireless in the corner. I didn't think anything of it, though I ought to have done.

" Sit down," she said.

"I don't think I will," I said. "The chair mightn't like it."

She smiled and spread a newspaper over the chair, and then I sat down.

"You aren't a sweep," she said.

"No," I said. "It's a kind of joke. A bet."

"It couldn't be with a German, I suppose?" she said, and I thought that perhaps she wasn't quite so bone-headed after all.

"Maybe, maybe not," I said. "Are you a Jossing, by any chance?"

She laughed, and that struck a jarring note. I thought: People with a laugh like that ought to know what they're letting themselves in for. It sounded quite brainless, and was far too high and shrill in pitch.

"You bet I am," she said.

I thought: God help King and Country! but I didn't say anything.

"You can trust me all right," she said, and I thought that that was pretty well the last thing I'd do. "If you say you've bumped a couple of them off, all I'll do will be to regret it wasn't a couple of hundred."

"I haven't bumped any one off," I said. "But they're after me for this, that and the other, and I'd be glad to change my clothes."

"And a little soap and water mightn't hurt, either?" she said. She was really quite sweet, and I thought she took it well and if only I was careful not to give her too much to laugh about, we'd get along swimmingly.

"You've said it," I said. "You're deuced sweet and understanding, and I realize I'm in luck to have fetched up here."

"We're both in luck," she said. "You can't imagine how willingly I'd send that pack barking up the wrong tree."

Well, that was absolutely the right spirit, and I began to feel at home.

"Are there any wearable clothes here?" I said.

"Stacks of them. I've got a hubby about your size—but that's the only thing I can say for him."

I didn't reply to that, for I wasn't any too keen to hear a long tale of woe about the neglected wife who is misunderstood by her husband and longs for a congenial outside interest to take her mind off things.

I thought: That explains it. She was obviously one of those parasites in the female flora who cling to a man and bother the life out of him. You know the type: Oh, Johnnie,

you don't love me any more—you aren't like you used to be—all the girls think you neglect me. Is there—Someone Else, Johnnie?

Women like that can be quite a nuisance. They can't ski, and they faint if they have to clean fish, and they never get sunburnt in the summer, and are completely useless generally.

I said:

"Do you think I could borrow a few clothes and have a wash and brush-up?"

She got up, opened a door, and said:

"This way."

And then she led me into her bedroom. I looked at her, of course, for it's my experience that every woman gives herself away pretty thoroughly when she precedes a man into her bedroom. I thought: Well, there's *one* line of business, at any rate, where this lady doesn't need to refer to a text-book.

"There's the bathroom," she said. "And there's his wardrobe. Just help yourself."

"But don't you think he'll mind?"

"I hope he will," she said. "But he's not coming home till early to-morrow morning."

Well, that suited me all right, too. But she went on standing there looking at me, and her smile was almost too sweet, so I said:

"That's fine. Next time you see me, I'll be looking a bit more respectable."

She took the hint and nodded. Then she went back to the sitting-room, and I shook my head once or twice and skinned off my trousers.

You know, one really ought to be a sweep just for the daily pleasure of standing under a shower and watching the soot relax its hold. There was a big mirror in the bathroom, and I stood there and let the water flow, and said as it were. "Good-morning!" to myself bit by bit as I emerged from darkness again. I began to sing, but cut myself short at once, remembering that strictly speaking I didn't belong here.

Ten minutes later I'd become fairly presentable again, and I shuffled into the bedroom and opened the door of the wardrobe. The chap was well set up, whoever he was, and the things looked as though they'd fit but his tailor wasn't just the one I'd have chosen, and it seemed as though he had a bit too soft a spot for stripes and checks. I chose a blue suit with a narrow white stripe and threw it on to the bed. And in so

doing I pricked myself on a pin in the lapel. I sucked my finger, and then I looked a bit closer. And there on the lapel sat the swastika badge of the Quislings quite smug and happy, grinning up at me.

I stood there in my birthday suit with pretty cold shudders running up and down my spine. This wasn't so good, and once again I could have kicked myself for my own stupidity, and thought that I could do with a nurse. I remembered the wireless set in the sitting-room—I ought to have known at once that you don't find such things in decent homes nowadays. I'd obviously walked into a trap, and probably it was already too late to do anything about it.

I dug about in the heap of clothes I'd thrown off, and found the revolver ; that made me feel a bit happier. Then I crept softly up to the door and listened. I heard her crooning in there, and that was harmless enough. It sounded as peaceful and thoughtless and idiotic as it ought to, and I knew that at any rate she hadn't rushed out to fetch the police.

Just when I'd decided to take a chance and had began to get dressed, I heard the faint click that means someone is at the telephone about to ring up. Aha ! I thought, and opened the door, and walked in with the revolver in my hand.

"Don't do that !" I said.

She was standing with her back to me and turned round quite calmly, but then her mouth flew open again, and she dropped the receiver and just goggled. And—as it says in Genesis—I knew that I was naked.

I had a sense of blushing all over, and I snatched up a cushion and clapped it in front of the worst. She recovered more quickly than was really fitting—looked interested rather than anything, and said :

"Oh, couldn't you find anything that fitted you ? "

I said :

"Put that receiver back."

I felt a fool, and it got me on the raw.

"Gladly," she said. "Perhaps you'll be good enough to put that revolver away too ? "

"Who were you going to phone ? " I asked.

She looked at me in surprise, and I said :

"Don't gape at me, blast your eyes. Turn round ! "

She laughed, and turned round.

Then she said :

"I'd arranged with a friend to go to a flick at nine. I was only going to ring up and say I couldn't come."

I said :

"That's not necessary. I'll be gone long before nine, so you can very well go."

"Will you?" she said. "What a pity."

I made an attempt to shove my revolver in my pocket, but for obvious reasons it didn't come off, and I felt more of a fool than ever. I said:

"I found a Quisling badge on the lapel of your husband's jacket."

"I can quite believe it," she said. "But that needn't stop you using the suit, need it?"

I thought: Keep calm. And I drew a deep breath once or twice, and actually got a bit of order into my thoughts, and then I said:

"Is your husband a Nazi?"

"He is," she said. "He's aide-de-camp to the Leader himself, and a revolting specimen in all other ways, too."

"And you?" I said.

She turned towards me again, and I forgot to bother about it much.

"Oh, *that's* what you're afraid of, is it?" she said. Oh well, I suppose it's not so surprising."

"Answer, damn it!" I said.

"No," she said. "I'm not a Nazi. You can depend on that."

It was plain she was telling the truth. I didn't doubt her at all. She was probably a thorough-going nitwit, but on that point she was all right. I said:

"Splendid. Excuse me, and excuse the fancy-dress."

"Don't mention it," she said. "I think it's rather becoming."

I retired and put everything on except the swastika. When I came in again, she'd got out a bottle of Hennessy and half a bottle of Haig and a lot of soda-water, and I said:

"What a beautiful sight!"

"They're my hubby's," she said. "I assume you're referring to the bottles and not to me."

"Both," I said, with a bow.

I began to like her, and when she'd mixed me a drink and I'd got outside it, I liked her still better, but not in the way you think. I've never met a woman whom I should have found it easier to be platonic with. She sat down beside me on the sofa and asked for a match. I lit one for her and she blew it out, and said:

"You know, I know you very well. I've seen you thousands of times at The Palms. Your name's Iben Holt."

I didn't like that. She seemed to be one of the communicative type, and I could think of many things I'd like better than her giving her girl-friends lively descriptions of my merits as a gentleman sweep. But it's only a waste of breath to ask women to keep silent about anything, so I said nothing.

"Cheerio!" she said. "I was frightfully bored, so it was awfully decent of you to come."

"Pleased to hear it," I said.

I thought the thing over, and it appealed to me less and less. It simply wouldn't do to let her wander about loose with what she knew. But what was I to do? After all, one can't just wring a woman's neck without more ado and shove the corpse down the rubbish-chute.

"I've wanted to know you for a long time," she said.

"But you were always so busy."

Arch, don't you think? With her eyes narrowed and her head on one side. I winced and said:

"Where's your husband?"

"He's on guard at the palace."

"No, now you're lying."

"I'm not. He's on guard at Quissy-pissy's, and won't be home before to-morrow. And do you know what: My hubby's called Adolf."

I leant back in the sofa and laughed. After all she was sweet.

"But give him his due," she said. "He was called Adolf long before Hitler came into fashion."

I thought that marriage is a hell, at best, and that if any woman in the world—and particularly Petter, of course—ever talked about me in that tone, I'd rather die and get the thing over and done with. I thought to myself, how she despises him and hates him and thinks nothing bad enough for him. I thought that there had been a time long ago when these two had wandered about under the trees in the moonlight, and she'd cooed in his ear: Oh Adolf, I've never loved any one else but you.

"I gather you aren't frightfully fond of your husband any longer," I said, for something to say.

"That puts it very mildly," she said, and her voice was so hard and grim that she deserved to be spanked, regardless of all political complications.

"Why don't you divorce him, then?" I said, and I could hear how cold my voice was myself.

She looked down and moved a little farther up the sofa. I

knew she was going to make a pass at my hand, so I stuck it in my pocket.

"I'd have you know, Mr.— Oh, bother it, can't I say Iben?"

I felt inclined to say No, thanks, but then I nodded, and she said:

"My name's Elna. Let's drink to it."

"And what would you have me know, Elna?"

She looked at me and slowly shook her head, and I saw that her throat could have done with being quite a bit slimmer.

"Oh dear," she said. "I'm not worth much, I know. And I've no money, and I can't bear to be alone, and I'm no good at any kind of work."

This agreed pretty well with what I'd thought, so I nodded and didn't give a damn if it looked rude.

"And besides, he'd make life hell for me if I did leave him," she said. "He'd get me arrested for political reasons."

I nodded again. It sounded probable.

Her eyes suddenly went quite hard, and she lifted her head. "If he'd been a proper *man*," she said, "I think I'd have stuck to him whether he'd been a Quisling or a Jossing."

I nodded her a third time, and funnily enough I liked her a bit better for saying that.

She sat with her head in her hand and her elbow propped on her knee, looking at the carpet. Then she sighed, took a gulp from her glass, and said:

"The only thing would be if I could get to Sweden. But I can't."

I got an idea, and said:

"Sweden? Why Sweden?"

"There's a man there who was frightfully in love with me. *Then*, at any rate. In 1939."

I knew life and I know the Swedes, and I said:

"A lot can change in a few years, you know."

She shook his head.

"I know he hasn't forgotten me."

I thought: These women! And I said:

"You can be in Sweden the day after tomorrow if you like."

This was the solution. I couldn't let her traipse round Oslo with a Nazi husband and a crowd of feather-brained friends, knowing everything about Iben Holt. Stockholm was another matter. This was the solution.

She said:

"Do you mean that?"

" Yes."

" Safe and sound and alive and kicking ? "

" Yes," I said.

She got up and paced about the floor quite a long time and I let her pace and drank a large whisky meanwhile. I knew that she was calculating whether Sweden was more attractive than the flat and the furniture and the aide. I lit a cigarette and leant back in the sofa, closing my eyes and feeling how tired I was.

She came and stopped in front of me.

" Righto," she said. " I'll do it. I've got a few jewels of my own. Can I take them with me ? "

" Rather ! " I said.

" When are we off ? "

" I don't know."

She thought a bit, and said :

" No, of course you don't. But just give me a ring when it's settled and say where we're to meet, and I'll be there."

I thought : No, thanks very much. She's probably all right, but nothing's certain in this world, and we're concerned with Marion just now. I said :

" If you want to go, you'll have to come with me at once."

She took another turn over the floor, puffing at her cigarette, and I knew that the wanderlust had begun to make itself felt. Most women go practically off their rocker when a journey's on the carpet, and for this ordinary little wife it was obviously an Adventure with a capital A.

" Why not ? " she said. " Where shall we go first ? "

" Home to my place."

" Iben," she said.

Narrowed eyes, head on one side. I winced.

" Cut that out," I said, and thought it was nothing less than disgusting the way we'd got familiar already. It must be the war and the black-out and all the rest of it that does it. And then I looked at the clock and it was already eight, and I thought that Petter and Marion would be sitting at home waiting, and probably speculating over what had happened to me.

" I must telephone," I said.

It was Petter who answered, and the sound of her voice made me feel happy at once.

" I love you," I said. I threw a glance to where Elna was sitting on the sofa. She looked pretty taken aback, but she took it with a stiff upper lip.

" Have you turned up again ? " said Petter, and I heard

how glad and relieved she was. "I was hoping you were dead."

"Not yet," I said. "I'm having a grand time."

"Where, pray?"

"With a charming young woman. She's given me a bath and some new clothes, and now we're sitting drinking genuine Haig."

"Oh," she said. "Oh indeed?"

"Did you say anything?" I said.

"I said: 'Oh indeed?'"

"Oh, you did?" I said. "I thought you said something else."

"No."

"By the way, we didn't find what we were looking for," I said.

"I've heard that already."

"Oh, you have?" I said.

"Rather!" She said. "He's here now, and I've given him a bath and we're drinking genuine Courvoisier, and he's sitting wallowing in your dressing-gown in front of the fire, and he really is a perfect pet, you know."

"Oh," I said. "Oh indeed?"

"Did you say anything?" she said.

I laughed.

"I love you."

"Splendid," she said, and rang off.

I put the receiver down slowly and stood there smiling, and Elna said:

"Funny conversation."

"You'd better go and pack," I said.

XIV

I SAT THERE feeling at peace with all the world while I waited, and it was grand not having to talk for a bit. The whisky was good and I was pretty exhausted with excitement and weariness, so I soon got a bit light-headed, and if you think there was anything wrong in that you can go and boil your heads. On the whole, I was satisfied with the day. Even if we hadn't found the formula we'd led friend Hahn round by the nose quite a distance—figuratively speaking, for the time being, but I looked forward to the day when it would be possible to do it literally. As well as that it tickled me to think of the Hamburg belle in the bath, and I sat having a quiet chuckle to myself in the sofa, and to be quite honest I

thought Elna go through her packing a bit too quickly.

But there she stood, anyway, and I can't deny she looked very nobby in her fur coat and travelling hat, and I thought that it wouldn't surprise me if she didn't get quite a good time, for there are a number of slow-witted, thick-headed Swedes who don't see the difference between this and the real thing. She had only a little case in her hand, and that was all to the good, for I'd been bracing myself to carry quite a lot, and that's never much fun, specially when one's out to attract the least possible attention. She saw my surprise and said :

"I'm leaving the whole bang shoot behind. I want to have everything new from head to foot."

Well, it wasn't my business, for I wasn't even going to pay for it, so I said :

"O.K. Let's go."

"Just a minute," she said. She produced a letter and stuck it to the top of the whisky bottle with a pin, and then she said :

"He's sure to find it *there* !"

"I'd better read it," I said. "Not that I'm all that nosey, but it wouldn't do to say too much."

"Censorship, eh ?" she said, with a smile.

I read the letter and screwed up my nose a bit, for the style wasn't exactly classical, but it wasn't really any of my business, and there was nothing in it I needed to cross out :

Dear Prime Idiot and Aide-de-Camp Adolf,—I'm leaving you, which I ought to have done long ago, for I hate and loathe and despise you, and you needn't think you've been the only one during our so-called marriage for a single minute. I shan't waste time saying what I think of you, but I hope you land up in hell.

Heil and love to the Leader and don't think you're ever going to see me again.—Elna.

She stood there laughing, and I looked gravely at her. She was obviously pretty bucked with her production, and said :

"Well ?"

"All right," I said. "Now *he*'ll be glad."

And I meant it.

He had a fairly presentable hat, and an overcoat that fitted pretty well, though I could have done without some of the checks, and as we went down in the lift I thought that it would never occur to any one that I'd been a sweep a bit

earlier in the afternoon. I was quite content with what I saw in the glass, but I thought that my aide-de-camp unfortunately had as bad taste in ties as in women.

When we get out at the bottom I turned up my collar and pulled my hat down a bit, for there were three men in the street door; one of them was obviously the care-taker, but not the other two. There are people who say they can recognize a German by the smell, but that's only superstition, for they don't on the whole smell any worse than other races. But even so, no one's going to fool me about Gestapo johnnies in mufti, for they adopt a strange mode of dress when they want to look really guileless. Usually they have riding-breeches and motoring-leggings; they have a passion for small green hats with feathers in the hatband, and they perch them on the very top of everything so that any child can see they've no backs to their heads and sport a convict crop and two pink rolls of fat in the neck.

I wasn't frightened in the least, for I can't be when I'm drunk; I took Elna by the arm and marched ahead, and the caretaker took off his cap with a bow and said:

"Good-evening, Mr. Antonsen."

I grunted and walked on. Elna stopped a moment and said:

"How's your wife getting on now, Hermansen?"

"Much better, ma'am," he said. "Thanks for asking."

Then she caught me up and took my arm, and we padded homewards. Nothing more spectacular happened, but when we got to the corner I looked at her as well as I could, and said:

"You aren't telling me I'm going round in the trousers of Antonsen himself."

"Certainly," she said. "I am Mrs. Antonsen."

"What an honour for me," I said. "I feel this is a historic occasion that should be celebrated."

When we got to my flat I stopped on the threshold to count. We had increased and multiplied. Petter was there, of course, and Marion, whom I glimpsed through the open door of the guest-room, and Gingernuts, who sure enough was sitting there playing the pasha in my dressing-gown, and precious little else, on the chesterfield in front of the fire, already pretty drunk and jolly. But besides these there was a comic old bird sitting on the sofa beside Petter holding her hand, and apparently having the time of his life. He had white hair, steel-rimmed spectacles and eyebrows as bushy as sweeps'

brushes ; his mouth was open in a broad grin and contained no teeth, but all the same it had an unflinching hold on one of my best cigars. I looked at the chap and liked what I saw. He probably had a very good sense of humour, and he hardly measured more than five foot two, even in high heels.

They'd brought out practically everything the house could offer, and there weren't many signs of the horrors of war and rationing.

"Hullo," I said. "I didn't know we had guests."

"Welcome home !" said Petter. "Come and say how-do-you-do to the professor."

Aha, I thought, cheering up. I put out my hand, and he unwillingly let go of Petter's for a second and pressed it warmly. I said :

"It's a good thing we got hold of you before the others did. And I'm sure you'll tell me everything while Petter gives me a drink."

He laughed.

"It was certainly at the very last minute, but it came off. A formula like that isn't very easy to puzzle out, you know. First they racked their brains several days over what sort of hieroglyphics the things really were, and at last some bright boy said they might be a formula. Then they had a whole lot of brain-racking to find out what sort of formula, and where it might come from, and it wasn't until yesterday that they discovered it was the explosive from Grafossen. But then there was a pretty hullabaloo in the factory, as you can imagine, and suspicion centred on a young engineer who's a diehard Jossing and may naturally be suspected of anything. He was grilled all night, but this morning they let him go again, for it was clear he must be innocent ; and then they began to ask me about this, that and the other, very respectfully and cautiously, but all the same . . . They couldn't seriously imagine it was I, but on the other hand it could hardly be any one else."

I nodded and said :

"I see." And I liked him better and better, and thought : It's true he looks old and battered, but his brain's as clear as crystal, and he says what needs to be said, and no more.

Petter put her arm round his shoulders, hugging him playfully, and I couldn't help a slight frown.

"I rang him up this morning at seven and said he ought to go into the country for a day or two, and he's no objection," she said.

"Grand," I said, and at last got my hat and coat off. "And this is Elna. We're getting quite a family."

Petter looked at her, and I gave a smile, for I knew Petter'd been looking at her what you might call surreptitiously ever since she came in, and I thought that was a good sign.

"Sit down, won't you?" said Petter, doing the hostess to the fingertips. "If you want something to drink there are various things knocking about."

Polite enough, but just about as cordial as a refrigerator.

Gingernuts said: "'Evening, miss. No offence meant, but I must say you're a nice eye-ful."

"Thanks ever so much," she said, smiling at him so that his hair ought to have stood on end.

"Pleasure's all on my side, miss," he said.

"Madam," I said.

"Oh hell!" he said. "What a pity."

"I'm not so much Madam as to make any difference," she said.

"Grand," said Gingernuts, and I anticipated romantic complications in the bows.

You've probably got one of those little flats so deuced practical that you can have a bath with one end and get breakfast in the kitchen with the other, so you realize it was a tricky business to find berths for six people in decorous and relatively comfortable form.

Petter went to work like a quartermaster-general, and I had little or no say. When everything was over and peace had at last spread her wings over my home, people were lying everywhere, and I was alone on the field of battle in an easy-chair in the hall, smoking my pipe and thinking over the situation.

Things were pretty O.K., of course. We had Marion, to all intents and purposes intact, and with careful transport and skilful treatment she could be made as good as new. We'd lost the formula but we'd got Professor Vetland with the formula in his head. That was two up to us, and I thought of Hahn, and laughed.

Then we had Elna. I pondered a bit and came to the conclusion that this was a point against us. Or at any rate half a point. She was of no use that any one could see, but she might be a whole lot of harm, or anyway a nuisance. I knocked out my pipe and thought that things might have been worse, all the same. And then I suddenly remembered what all this really implied, and I turned hot all over at the thought of what I'd let myself in for.

We were sitting here in the middle of an Oslo block of flats, with people on all sides, giving quarter to a very much WANTED young woman valued at 50,000 crowns. Furthermore, a professor with the most terrific secret under his hat. I didn't dare think what they'd value him at, and I shuddered when I saw in my mind's eye the legions of disgruntled Gestapo men who were at this moment scuttling round looking for him.

And now, here in my flat behind my locked door in my comfortable chair, I was overwhelmed with such wild panic that I could have run out on to the balcony and screamed for help. These things can't be explained. I sat there by myself and lost my head, expecting to see the catastrophe come in through the door in a Tyrolean hat and a mackintosh. I groaned.

Petter came out at once. She looked at me and said :

"Have you got a tummy-ache?"

"I'm scared, Petter," I said. "Spinelessly scared."

"So'm I, Iben," she said. "Shall we be scared together?"

She was sweet and understanding. She didn't think I was spineless. I dropped on my knees in front of her and took her hand and kissed it, and naturally I felt a fool, but not quite such a fool as you might think. And she stroked my hair, and I suddenly grew quite calm again and looked up at her and said: "Petter, I love you."

"That's the third time to-day," she said. "You've used up your ration."

We both laughed, and she sat down in the chair and I sat down on the floor beside her. She pulled my hair once or twice and said:

"Iben. I've got to ask you for fifteen thousand crowns."

I said: "A cheque's no use to you, I suppose."

"No. I must have small notes, and I must have them before twelve to-morrow."

"Righto," I said. "It can be managed."

She let her finger slide along my chin from ear to ear, and it felt delicious. Then she said:

"You don't ask what I want the money for."

I said: "Let me believe as long as possible that it's for a new hat."

"Don't you like the one I've got?" she said.

"Oh, it'll do," I said. "But only thanks to the face underneath."

She bent down and kissed me on the neck and said:

"You're rather sweet."

I yawned and said :

" I'm *very* sleepy."

She laughed and rumbled up my hair, and that's a thing I usually get fearfully indignant about, but not now.

" It's pretty full-up here, to-night," she said. " But there's no one in your bed yet."

" Praise be to God!" I said. And then I smiled and looked at her and said :

" There you are. It's fate."

" What's fate?"

" Oh, well," I said, blushing. " You said yourself my bed was the only one."

" Well?"

" And there are two of us."

She looked at me, not exactly severely but all the same

. . . and then she said :

" The bench in the bathroom's not bad."

" No thanks," I said.

" One of us could easily lie on that."

" Are you being serious?"

" Yes," she said. " And I don't think you'll find it such a lot of fun in there."

X V

If you've never tried to get your necessary eight hours of sleep on a bench in the bathroom, I can only give you the good piece of advice not to try; just believe me when I say that it *can* be done, but only just.

I dreamt that the devil was standing beside me the whole time in a mackintosh and Tyrolean hat, sticking me in the behind with his fork while he demanded 50,000 for a new hat. When I finally woke up for the last time and saw that it was seven o'clock, my back was aching so badly that it might all have been true. I tottered into the sitting-room and stumbled over the professor, and he opened his eyes and politely wished me good-morning. He said that he'd slept well and that it was good of me to have him there. I said the pleasure was all on my side and asked his pardon for having trodden on him, and he said it didn't matter at all.

Gingernuts woke up on the sofa and told us to shut up as he had a headache, and I asked him what could he expect. Then Petter came out of my bedroom, saying " Good-morning,

every one," and did we want coffee. And we certainly did. And then Elna put her head out of the maid's room in a negligée and said, 'Gosh, are you here?' which she knew dam' well, and she said she'd had such frightful dreams about Antonsen, and I said she couldn't expect anything else, and I'd had a dream or two myself. And to tell the truth that's all that happened, and I've given it as shortly as possible to spare my own feelings, for I was sour that morning and don't like to think back on it too closely.

But tears soon dry on men of my sort, and while I was still under the shower I warbled a bar or so and realized that no more harm had been done that a cup of coffee wouldn't cure and perhaps a drop of brandy in secret behind the cupboard door.

I came out of the bathroom and said: "Next please!" and thought for God knows which time that I must marry Petter as soon as possible. She'd organised everything in an instant; there wasn't a sign of a blanket anywhere, and even Gingernuts' tie had been tidied away, and I hoped he'd never find it again. And the place was aired, and Elna wasn't about, and there was a glorious smell of coffee, and I heard the bacon chittering to itself as it fried. I went out into the kitchen and there she stood, trim and fresh as never before leaning over the pots, and I kissed her on the neck and said:

"Petter, I love you."

In short, the day had begun.

I was an odd assembly that sat round the breakfast-table looking hopefully at the future. We had all just put down our forks and were sitting over our coffee and cigarettes when the door opened and Marion came in clad in a pair of my Pyjamas. I jumped up and helped her, for she was pretty wobbly, and I asked her what in the devil she was doing.

"I must practise walking a bit to-day," she said. "I'm much better, and I don't mean you to have to carry me to Sweden."

I put her on the sofa and thought what a game little cuss she was. Her arm was splinted and fastened right across her chest, and the tight bandage round her abdomen kept the ribs in their place and supported her insides where they'd kicked her. Her face looked a whole lot better already, and to add to it all, now she could walk. I thought: Well, well, it might have been much worse.

Petter came in with the newspaper and handed it to the professor without a word. He gave a broad grin and said:

"I'd no idea I was worth so much."

I peeked over his shoulder and read :

DISAPPEARANCE OF FAMOUS SCIENTIST—
WHERE IS PROFESSOR VETLAND ?

Prominent National Socialist probably kidnapped for political reasons.

100,000 crowns reward for information leading to the arrest of the bandits.

There was quite a buzz after that ; most of them had something to get off their chests, and finally Petter got up and made a speech :

" This is obviously beginning to get pretty dangerous, and there are one or two things we all have to think about. Here you're in good hands, and I hardly need say that you mustn't go out, and preferably keep away from the windows, too. But you mustn't ring up anywhere, either, and if there's a ring at the door or the telephone while Iben and I are out, no one must answer but just lie low."

I thought she was adorable, and I could see by the professor's face that he thought the same ; and I can swear he was sitting there wishing he was about forty years younger and still had his teeth.

I said :

" A jolly good breakfast. And now how about Elna washing up ? "

Gingernuts at once said he'd help her dry, and I said : Go to it, and thought that it didn't matter, for to-morrow she'd be in Sweden and couldn't do him any harm.

I was already out and about by nine, and I shan't tire you describing how a chap in my position gets hold of fifteen thousand crowns before noon, for a child could do it provided it had the sort of father I did. I don't know if it was necessary but, just in case, I got the money from different sources, so that no one should start thinking too much about what I was going to do with such a large amount in a lump sum. And at half-past two I was at The Palms, and of course Jacob was there, but he wasn't as amiable as usual.

" 'Morning," he said. " How's the harem ? "

" She's quite well, thank you," I said.

" She ? " said Jacob, " I thought there were two of 'em. Marion, what ? "

I looked at him and could have dispensed with this unduly great interest in Marion.

"She was more temporary," I said. "One of Petter's cousins from Ringsaker, who happened to be in town."

"Then she's gone again?" he said.

"Yes," I said. "Why?"

"I hoped she might do for me."

I shook my head and said:

"She was hardly your type."

He looked a bit downcast, and in a way I felt sorry for him. He said:

"I'm not so particular about the type. It's not as simple as that. It's obviously me who's not the girl's type. Not any girl's."

I laughed and patted him on the shoulder, and said:

"Cheer up, Jacob. You've always got the booze."

"And there's not much of that, either," he said. He wasn't in a good mood and I thought it was rather remarkable that he left before Ola gave the signal to start and the drinks arrived.

I'd been lucky to-day and got hold of a good corner right down the bar, and I got over there with four drinks and put them on the floor beside my chair. Then I let the crowd struggle for existence round Ola's counter as best they could, sat thoughtfully alone on the outskirts, and was drinking my first when Petter arrived.

"Good-afternoon and peace be with you," I said. "Have you got to the end of the fifteen thousand?"

She nodded, and it seemed to me she was waiting for something.

"Here's a drink," I said. "Put it back and you shall have another one, and then we must go home and get dinner for the children."

She looked at me and said:

"Why don't you say you love me?"

I laughed and said:

"Pure forgetfulness. Besides, I didn't think you were particularly interested."

"Nor am I," she said. "But all the same, are you peeved about something?"

"Peeved?" I said. "What are you driving at?"

"Oh, something's the matter," she said. "And I know what it is. You're sulking because I haven't told you what I was going to do with that money."

That was all rot, and I said:

"You're quite wrong, Petter. It doesn't worry me in the least, as long as you don't spend it all on cakes and spoil your figure. Oh, and by the way, I love you."

She smiled, took my hand and bent the finger far back, so I said: "Owch! I realize that's a kind of love treatment, but it hurts."

"I'd thought of telling what the money's been used for," she said.

"Have it your own way," I said.

"With that money we're getting thirty Jews over the frontier to-night, and another twenty-six to-morrow."

"Splendid," I said.

"They're old people and small children and some who are so ill that they can't walk, so it's a pretty awkward trip."

"This is great," I said. "Very little of the old man's money has been put to so good a use. But look here."

"Well?"

"You haven't by any chance thought of going with them?"

She smiled at me, put her head on one side (but not as Elna did), and said:

"And if I were, what then?"

"I should simply forbid it," I said. "And that's my last word."

She laughed and said:

"Don't be afraid. What use would I be. It'll be Otto and Gingernuts."

"Why not me?"

"You and Thorstein are taking another route to-night with Marion and Elna and the professor."

"Just as you say," I said. "Cheerio."

She emptied her glass and looked a little surprised that there wasn't more there, so I fished up a new one for her off the floor.

"I don't know that I'm so frightfully keen on your new girl friend," she said.

"Aren't you?" I said. "We're getting married at Easter."

"Congratulations," she said.

"Oh well," I said coyly, "we've got to, you see. We're going to have a baby."

"You devil," she said, laughing, and then she bent swiftly over and bit my hand, hard and said:

"Do you think anyone saw?"

Gingernuts was lying on the sofa resting, in order to be in good shape for the exertions of the night, and quite rightly.

I knew he was going to have a hard job of it, and to tell the truth I was glad that I only had Marion and Elna and an eight-stone professor to look after.

Elna sat beside Gjernnuds in the corner of the sofa telling him he had beautiful hair and he liked that, of course. He countered by whispering a whole lot of things in her ear which it was perhaps just as well we didn't hear. She laughed shrilly, and I saw by Petter's face that she shared my views on that laugh.

We had finished eating and were sitting there with coffee and brandy, merely waiting for darkness and Thorstein.

The professor got up, looked round and said :

"There are one or two things I'd like to say. Is there anywhere we could talk business."

Petter and I took our glasses into my bedroom and sat down on the bed, and he said :

"It would naturally only be a waste of time to give you a lecture on that explosive we're working on at Grafossen ; you wouldn't understand a tenth part of it. But it's linked up with a number of experiments with nitrogen that we've been busy with here in Norway. The Germans discovered a whole lot of new possibilities, and have now got so far that I can start production of that explosive on a large scale with the present formula. In a way it's a nuisance the Germans found the formula at Marion's place, for now they know the cat's out of the bag, and they realize why I've disappeared.

"All that talk in the papers about my having been kidnapped by bandits is pure humbug : *they* don't believe it. The result will probably be that they speed up preparations for production, and it's conceivable they may get the plant ready at Grafossen by the middle of next March, that is, in four months. Is that clear ? "

We said it was clear, and he went on :

"A very large plant is needed, and it's extremely expensive. So the furnaces and the foundation and several other important parts have to be made in Germany, sent here by boat, and fitted into the equipment we already have at Grafossen. And all this can be done by March. My job now is to start the same work in England and establish the same plant at a factory there, so that it's ready at the same time. It'll be difficult, but it can be done."

I thought this over a bit, and said :

"That means that in March both Germany and England will be manufacturing an explosive that they can send the whole world to jiggy with ? "

"Something like that, yes," he said. "Even if you exaggerate a trifle. And what we'd like best of all would be that *only* England manufactured that explosive in March!"

"I get you," I said, and Petter said:

"An air-raid?"

"I don't think it's possible," he said. "The assembly shop is underground, protected by a series of layers of concrete and steel. I'm not a physicist and don't know if a direct hit by a block-buster would do the trick, but I don't think so. There's only one thing to be done: a couple of experts must get into the shop and blow up the plant just when it's quite ready. Then they'll have to begin all over again. Will you do it?"

We said we would, and I said:

"We've got an expert on tap—Gingernuts."

The professor smiled and shook his head:

"With all due respect to Gingernuts I don't think it would be any use. I've followed his career in the papers with interest for several years, and there's no doubt he's a clever chap with dynamite. But in this case I think I'd recommend trotyl and a couple of English experts."

"You know best," I said. "And what do you want us to do?"

"Very extensive preparations are required. You must get hold of an exact sketch of the possible ways of getting into the shop, and I can't help you much there, for to tell the truth I don't know how it's done myself. I've been there, of course, and I wasn't taken in blindfold or anything, but I certainly didn't see much. Locks and guards and alarm systems I know nothing about, except that they're all there. You must find out about the times the guards are changed and the shifts, and you must try and buy over a couple of workmen, preferably Germans, just before the crucial point. You must also get one, or if possible, two men who can help the expert and act as guides. We must do it when the snow's on the ground, and only experienced skiers can come into question."

Petter sat listening to him with shining eyes, and for my part I was so impressed, I wanted to give three cheers.

"Splendid!" I said. "This is the best stunt ever!"

"In the first place it may cost you your lives," said the professor, dryly. "But if it comes off we'll hold up German production for six months."

Petter said:

"We'll take it on, and you don't have to tell us to mind our step."

He got up and patted her cheek.

"You're sweet, my dear," he said. "And I'd very much like to be allowed to call you Petter too. If I'd been forty years younger . . ."

"I knew it!" I said. "Don't go on, Prof. for God knows if she won't take you as you are, and I'd actually meant her to marry me."

XVI

THORSTEIN came at nine, and he said :

"I don't altogether like this."

He was a bit pale and looked troubled. I offered him a drink but he shook his head.

"I've got the lorry out at Storengen," he said. "Everything's ready and I've got enough petrol, but I don't know. I've loafed about here for a bit, and there's a chap hanging round that I'm not quite sure of."

"What sort of a chap?" said Petter.

"A little beggar."

"What does he look like?" I asked.

"Oh, I dunno. A little chap. Look for yourself."

I put the light out and pulled up the blind, but there was no one in the street.

"Well, anyway, he's gone now," I said. "Perhaps he was only keeping a date."

Petter said :

"You must chance it, anyway. We daren't wait another day."

"Righto," said Thorstein. "Erik's bringing his taxi in twenty minutes. Drive off to Storengen, and in through the back door in the shed."

Gingernuts said :

"Erik'd better drive up to the other entrance, on Arbin Street. Then you go through the corridors and won't have to use the main entrance. I don't believe much in Thorstein's little chap, but it don't hurt to be on the safe side."

Thorstein went off, and Petter produced the pills and doled them out to Marion and Elna and the professor, and Elna said :

"Gracious! What's this?"

"Poison," I said. "If the worst comes to the worst, you'd do well to swallow it."

"Never!" she said, her eyes ready to pop out of her head.

"Nothing will happen, anyway," I said. "You're as safe as on your mother's knee."

She didn't say anything, but she was frightfully pale, and I thought: She wouldn't be much good in a tight corner.

Marion was sitting on the sofa smoking a cigarette, and the professor was reading a technical journal as if all our preparations had nothing to do with him. Marion looked very handsome, and if I hadn't known she was a woman, I should have been in two minds about it. Her hair was neatly cut, and the brown suit fitted well. With her little moustache she looked like a fragile and slightly effeminate Frenchman.

"You're a regular dog," I said. "You'll wreak havoc among the girls. But what's the real point?"

"They've got spies on the other side too," said Petter. "And just now they've got their eyes peeled for Marion."

I thought: If it's true about those spies in Sweden, then it's not so good about Elna, either. She can't keep her mouth shut except when she's asleep.

I went in and got dressed. Good warm tweeds and a pair of sturdy skiing mittens. No luggage, only the revolver. Thorstein had calculated that we ought to be home again about five in the morning. When I got back to the sitting-room, Elna was lying flat on the sofa bawling her head off, and Petter said:

"Now she doesn't want to go."

"Doesn't want to go?"

"She's come over nervous."

I shrugged my shoulders and said:

"Want or not—she's made her bed and she must lie on it."

"I want to go home!" wailed Elna.

I took Petter into the bedroom with me, and said:

"This is the very devil, but what could I have done? She recognized me. We couldn't let her go round loose. It's dangerous enough to let her loose in Sweden."

"That's all arranged," said Petter. "They've been informed there, and will take charge of her at once."

"Who?" I said.

"The Government Criminal Police. It's still going on and works well. She won't be allowed to speak to a soul."

"Splendid," I said. "But now she doesn't want to go, eh?"

Petter took out her first-aid case and found the syringe she used on Marion. I nodded.

We went in, and I sat down beside her on the sofa and stroked her hair and said:

"All right, Elna, you shall go home."

I held her arm. Petter stuck the needle in and she let out a yell, and Gingernuts said:

“ Good-night, lovely. You were sweet while it lasted.”

We'd left the town and Thorstein was driving fast. He was showing more light than he ought to have done, strictly speaking, according to the black-out regulations. I was impressed at what he'd managed to produce.

The lorry was considerably altered. It was grey now, and had got a new platform with sides a foot and a half high, covered with a thick grey tarpaulin buttoned down like a hood. Marion was lying under the tarpaulin on a mattress, and I thought she must be suffering a good deal, and the professor and Elna rattled around as best they might, and I was glad the professor was as light as he was, and that Elna was sleeping so sweetly that she wouldn't be able to profit from the bruises till to-morrow. They had orders to be as quiet as mice if we got stopped on the way.

I felt fairly confident. We had Wehrmacht numbers front and back, and it would be a sharp eye that discovered it wasn't a genuine German ammunition lorry on its way to the frontier fortifications. At the very end of the platform a little red flag was fluttering ; that meant that we were carrying dangerous explosives, and would probably make the frontier police lose any desire to inspect the load thoroughly if they stopped us. Thorstein had good papers made out by the Commandant's office in Oslo ; they weren't genuine, but not far from it.

It had been a remarkably mild autumn this year. Not a single snowflake had fallen anywhere in the country, and the woods still stood dark and heavy on either side of the road. There wasn't much traffic. Now and then a lorry, mate to our own, came tearing round a bend, and we passed one another at lightning speed, so that I scarcely got a glimpse of the driver's steel helmet. I thought : What a nerve we've got ; that's why we shall pull it off.

Thorstein hadn't said anything for half an hour, but when we passed Ebbestad, he shook his head and said :

“ No, I don't like it.”

“ Buck up, old man,” I said. “ It's gone well up to now.”

“ Keep your eyes skinned here,” he said, peering out into the darkness, “ for a blue light.”

I stared till my eyes began to water, and sure enough, a blue light ahead, which swung slowly backwards and forwards just by the road. Thorstein dimmed the headlights, slowed down, and took out his gun.

Just before our lights went out completely, they fell on a figure in the uniform of the frontier police standing by the side

of the road. I only got a glimpse of bright buttons ; then everything was black. The lorry stopped, and Thorstein said :

" Show a light, and I'll shoot."

" Same here," said the man, with a laugh.

" What's the outlook ? " said Thorstein.

" Not so good," said the man. " If I were you I'd turn back and try again to-morrow. Orders came half an hour ago to double the guards at all roads."

That didn't sound too good ; it scared me and I got a bit of a belly-ache. I couldn't see Thorstein's face, and there was a pause before he said :

" We can't turn back. We must chance it."

" Then you'd better take the road through Sundstrakka," said the man. " I don't think it's guarded, for no one's expecting any one there. It's pretty long, as you'll have to go round the lake, and it's not a very good surface, but it should be safe."

" How near to the frontier do I get ? " said Thorstein.

" Practically up to it, if you want to. At Trydgestolen, see ? But there you're just in between two German forts. They're two and a half miles from one another, so it should be all right. The Germans don't like going out at night, and it's been perfectly quiet there for three months at least, so they don't expect any one."

" Thanks," said Thorstein. " Where do I turn off ? "

" About six miles from here, at the bridge. You can't miss it, and then all you've got to do is to keep to the right all the time."

We drove on. Thorstein spat through the window and said :

" Now you see where your money goes."

" Who was that ? "

" Never seen him in my life. And I shall take good care he doesn't see me. Lads like that would sell their own mother for a thousand-crown note."

He didn't say any more before we got to the bridge and turned on to the road towards Sundstrakka. He put out the headlights now, and we seemed to be asking to be killed. He drove as quickly as before, if not more so, and I can't think how he could see.

He said :

" It looks as though they were on to us. They don't double the guard for fun. I wonder if that little chap I saw has got a finger in this pie."

The tension began to get me down, and I said :

" My God, your driving ! "

" Yes," he said. " I know how bloody awful it is sitting beside any one driving like this. Can't you shut your eyes and take a nap ? "

I thought that was a farcical idea, but I tried it, and believe it or not, I managed it somehow. I sat and dozed, and thought to myself that if something goes wrong, I wouldn't see it anyway. I won't say I slept, but I lost interest in my surroundings and thought of many things, principally of Petter.

It was a long journey, and a monotonous one. Every time I raised my eyelids a bit I saw the forest like a black mass on either side. It felt as if we were driving in a dark ditch through the landscape, and I thought that, as a matter of fact, the chances of any one discovering us were very small. The road was like a nightmare, and Marion must have been in hell. I took out the map, shone the blue pocket-torch on it, and saw that we were driving through practically deserted tracts, and that according to the clock we ought to be quite near the frontier.

" What's the time ? " said Thorstein.

" One," I said.

" Won't be home before light," he said. " But blast that. Where are we ? "

" Thirty-six miles from Arrevik," I answered. I'd once been a map-reader in the Monte Carlo Rally, so I was up to the stunt. It was a good map, and I know a lot about maps, so I could see the terrain in front of me almost as if I'd been born there.

" The road goes over the frontier at Trygdestölen," I said. " And it looks as though it ran quite nice and evenly through a valley. There are high hills on either side.

" The only question is where the Germans are," he said.

I scanned the map again, and said :

" I'm almost prepared to bet you I know where they are. One of the forts is about a mile and a half south of the road, by the lake. They *can't* be anywhere else, for the whole terrain is nothing but bog except just there."

" And the other fort ? "

I thought a bit and said :

" I'd back half a mile to a mile and a half north-east of the road, but I'm not quite sure. It may be nearer."

" He said two and a half miles," mumbled Thorstein.

" That might fit. How far do I dare drive d'you think ? "

"We-ell," I said. "Almost right up."

"I've a powerful engine," he said.

"Yes, but the hills absorb a good bit of the noise."

He thought a bit.

"The wind's to the north, and half a mile isn't much. I don't like it, but to hell with that."

It was much colder out here than in Oslo, but all the same my hands were wet inside my mittens, and my shirt was sticking to my back. I was afraid, and I thought: You aren't much of a man, you aren't, and if they get hold of you and begin with the thumb-screws, you'll babble out all you know, and then some.

I could only see Thorstein's profile in the light from the dashboard; it looked hard and set. I said:

"I'm scared. Thorstein. Aren't you?"

"'Course I'm scared," he said. "Only boneheads aren't scared."

I smiled and felt better. At any rate, I was scared in good company.

It was a quarter to three when we finally stopped. I felt pounded to a jelly, and felt that the poor wretches under the tarpaulin must look as though they'd been put through a mincing-machine. I went out and loosened the hood, and Marion said:

"Hallo, you. What a pity you woke me. I was having such a nice dream."

I thought: She's the goods, and if I wasn't in love with Petter, then . . . I said:

"Your Grace's bath is ready, and what are the orders for breakfast?"

She laughed and said:

"Here's a leg. Pull me out."

I stood with her in my arms, and the tears came into my eyes. Her face was grey with pain, and she'd bitten her lips till they bled but she laughed. I kissed her, and the moustache made it quite amusing.

"I'll never forget you, Marion," I said. "Not if I live to be a hundred."

"You won't," she said. "Not in this branch. Where are we?"

"Where we should be. D'you think you can walk?"

"Rather!" she said. "And the professor's in fine form."

He climbed down and gave me a pleasant smile, as far as I

could see. He'd banged his nose, and there was blood on him here and there, and he rubbed himself behind and said :

"If I hadn't already lost my teeth in 1912, I think they'd have gone now."

My heart warmed to these two, and I thought : It was worth it, after all. Then I lifted Elna out, and she was surprisingly undamaged, and was still sleeping like a child. I thought she'd be my sort of cross to carry over.

Thorstein said :

"Let's go. We're behind schedule as it is. I'll take the luggage."

He threw Elna over his shoulder like a sack, and went in front of us with long strides. The professor tripped after him, light and agile as a little goat, and he looked like one too. He evidently didn't go in for hats, and his white hair stood straight up on end and looked swell. I brought up the rear with Marion, and when we'd gone sixty yards, she began to cry and said :

"It's no use, Iben. It's the very devil, but it's no use."

I took her in my arms and kissed her again, and it's shameful to say it, but I liked it.

"It's all right, Marion," I said. "I'm almost glad of it, for you're a nice armful."

"You disgusting little flirt !" she said. "Can't you see I'm a great big man with a beard and everything ?"

Half an hour later Thorstein stopped and said :

"I think we're in Sweden now."

I put Marion down on a stone and straightened my back, and she said :

"Thanks for the ride. What about a fag ?"

"All right," said Thorstein. "But be careful."

The professor said :

"I suppose it won't do for you two to be taken by the Swedish frontier guards. I might go a bit farther in and see if there are any here."

"I was just going to suggest it," said Thorstein.

The professor tripped off, and we lay flat in the cold damp undergrowth, taking deep breaths, with our cigarettes held inside our hands. Quarter of an hour later he came back in high spirits.

"All clear," he said. "They're sitting in a hut only five hundred yards from here. You can safely go back ; I'll take care of the ladies."

We pressed his hand, and he said :

"And don't forget Grafossen."

Marion stretched out her strong little hand to me and said :
" Thanks for all you've done, Iben. Love to Petter. And if you want a piece of good advice, just take her, whatever she says. It's what she expects."

" Do you think so ? " I said.

" I'm a woman myself, in spite of appearances," she said.

XVII

GOING back took a lot less time, of course, and I didn't think we'd been going long when Thorstein suddenly took hold of my arm and stopped. I looked round and found we must be only a couple of hundred yards from the lorry.

" Listen ! " he said. " Hear anything ? "

It was as silent as the grave in the forest, and I only heard my own heart. But suddenly I jumped. A twig had snapped.

" There's something over there by the lorry," said Thorstein.

He took out his gun, and I did the same. Then he began creeping slowly and cautiously along the path ; I followed, taking care not to tread on the dry branches that had fallen down and were lying across the way.

Five minutes later he stopped again and lay down. I crept up beside him and saw the lorry. In front of it stood two shadows, hardly visible in the darkness.

" Germans ? " I whispered.

" Dunno."

The light from a pocket-torch fell on the lorry, and it looked as though whoever was there was inspecting it carefully. The light flickered about, and suddenly one of them got in its way, and I saw what sort they were. They were Hirdmen. I saw the bright buttons on the blue uniforms, the ski-ing caps and the shoulder-bells. Hirdmen on frontier guard. Thorstein had seen them too ; he nudged me with his elbow, and grinned. I grinned back, and thought that it might well have been a lot worse.

The pocket-torch was pointing downwards, and I realized they were looking for our footprints. Then the light fell on to the path and right over our heads. And then both the chaps came padding towards us, following the tracks on the ground. When they got closer I saw they were carrying carbines.

Thorstein pressed his face to the ground and I did the same. They went straight past us, and then Thorstein got up and said :

"Stand still, lads, and drop your guns."

I can very well imagine that it must be pretty foul to hear a voice like that behind one in the middle of the forest, when one thinks one's got one's prey in front of one. They stood there stiff as pokers, and then the first carbine, and immediately afterwards the second, fell to the ground.

Thorstein said :

"Hands up, and get over to the truck."

I've run into Quislings both before and after that night, and I can't altogether agree with people when they say they're all such poor fish. Many of them are hard-boiled enough—too hard-boiled, one might rather say. But I must admit that these two showed up badly. When we got to the lorry, one of them quite simply flopped straight down in the ditch and howled, and the other said :

"Don't kill me. I'm only eighteen. I won't say anything about having seen you."

"Are there any more of your sort here?" asked Thorstein.

"No, no, there's only us," he said. "Please let us go, and we'll keep our mouths shut."

I went up to the one who was snivelling, and took him by the shoulder.

"Get up," I said. "Blubbering won't help."

He was scared clean out of his wits, and he got on to his feet with such panic speed that I was almost sorry for him. He stood quaking before me; his cap had gone. Thorstein lit the pocket-torch, and we stood there in the light looking at one another. I said :

"Put that light out, blast you!"

I recognized him. He was a fair-haired, soppo little mother's boy whom I'd seen at the The Palms hundreds of times in days gone by. And it was equally clear he'd seen me.

Thorstein put the torch out, and I said :

"I know you, I think. And I fancy you recognize me, eh?"

"No, no," he said. "I've never seen you before."

But I could hear he was lying.

"What are we to do?" I said to Thorstein. "We can't let them go."

"Oh God," said the fair-haired one. "You aren't going to shoot us, are you?"

"Shut your trap," I said. "Another syllable, and that's the end of you."

Thorstein said :

"I couldn't shoot a chap with his hands up. Could you?"

"I've never tried," I said, but of course I knew that it couldn't even be thought of.

"We'll have to take them with us," said Thorstein.

"Even if it means supporting them for the rest of the war."

I said:

"Take off your straps and stand with your faces to the lorry."

We tied them with the shoulder-belts so they couldn't move a finger, and I found a handkerchief on one of them; it was dirty, but that was his funeral, for he was to have it in his mouth for the rest of the night. The other didn't seem to have one. He was rather a stronger type, tall and broad-shouldered and dark. That story about his being eighteen might be true. I said:

"Don't you use a handkerchief?"

He didn't answer; merely glowered at me, and Thorstein said: "All the worse for him."

He handed me a cleaning-rag which bore the marks of long and faithful service, and I showed it into the fellow's mouth and said:

"Here you are, my boy. You get the oil free without a ration card."

We heaved them up on to the platform and bound them fast so that they were sitting with their backs to the driver's cabin. They would have been bumped about a bit too badly if they'd been left to lie loose. Then we drew the tarpaulin across again, and drove off.

I felt happy and relieved, and thought things had gone well. I thought the worst was over. The chance of being stopped on the way home was always less, and in any case Marion and the professor were well over the frontier by now, and that was the most important thing. I lit a cigarette, and Thorstein said:

"Stick one in my face, too."

We drove quickly, and for every yard farther from the frontier I breathed more freely. I said:

"What are we going to do with those two rosebuds behind?"

"Something can be fixed," he said. "It isn't only the Germans who have a prison to stick people into. Though you can bet our prisoners get a better time. And no one will ask after them. Hirdmen cut and run to Sweden every night."

He stopped a second at the end of the lake, and got out and threw the carbines into the water. Then we drove on again.

I was tired. Fear always has the effect of giving me a

stomach-ache, and then when everything's over I just get sleepy and think everything would be fine if I could drop off for a bit. I leant back in the seat and shut my eyes and didn't wake till Thorstein said :

" See anything in front there ? "

I gazed, but saw nothing. Yes, a kind of dark mass beside the road. No. *On* the road. I shouted :

" Stop ! The road's blocked. "

Instead he pushed down the accelerator as far as it would go, and the engine roared like an aeroplane. We raced forward towards the obstruction at a frightful speed. I saw it was a black police car. Just as we got up to it, a burst of flame came from it, making a star on the wind-screen in front of me with a round hole in the middle.

Then Thorstein swung the lorry violently to the right, and I hit my head against the woodwork so everything went black. The lorry ran out in the ditch and lurched perilously to the right. Then it straightened up again and we were past. If any one asks how it happened, I can only reply that I haven't the least idea, and that I'm still inclined to believe it must all have been a lie.

The heavy lorry raced along at a furious rate, and Thorstein sat crouched over the wheel with a white, set face.

I heard the dry reports from a tommy-gun behind me, a long rattling series of shots ; then we turned a corner, and there were no more.

" That was a near thing, " I said.

" Yes, " said Thorstein.

He sounded fagged. I said : " Did they hit you ? "

" Yes. "

" Where ? "

" Dunno. "

I took out the torch and flashed it on him. A little blood was oozing out under his left arm, and I saw that he'd got the bullet in the left side of the back, and that it had probably gone through the lung. I said :

" Does it hurt ? "

" No. "

" It's not bleeding much. "

" Good, " he said. His head fell forward. The car began to zigzag a bit, and I saw that he was dead. I dropped the torch, took the wheel, and stopped long enough to move him over. Then I drove on again, and the tears coursed over my face so that I could hardly see the road.

They had a car, and I knew they were after me now.

I'm not a bad driver, and I've been in a race or two in my time, but I've never driven on such a road at such a rate, and don't mean to do it ever again. I had my work cut out to keep the thing on the road, and each time I took a curve I was practically sure it was going to be the last.

I think an hour passed in this way, and then I reached the crossed-roads where we'd turned off from the main road. I stopped a second and stuck my head out, but couldn't hear anything. I knew they expected me to drive west, away from the frontier, and I had no doubt they had warned their posts farther on to give me a warm reception.

I started up again and drove east towards the frontier along a narrow but quite decent road.

I thought : You must get rid of the lorry and take a chance on foot.

There isn't much to relate about the next hour, and I don't think I could do it even if there were. My mind was a complete blank ; I just sat and drove mechanically, and the only things that existed for me were the two sides of the road.

The forest got thinner, and suddenly I saw a main road in front of me. I drove in between the trees and got out. Not a sound. The time was half-past five. It was still dark, but not as dark as it had been, and I grew frightened. I went round the lorry and loosened the tarpaulin. A hideous sight met my eyes inside. They were both dead ; the bigger one with the dark hair had got the bullets in his chest ; the holes actually ran almost horizontally across his front, and I thought that this was crack shooting and that the boy had probably saved my life. The other had been hit in the head, and I won't say what he looked like. The bullet that had got Thorstein had passed in between them through the wall of the driver's cabin, and I thought : Dam' bad luck.

I sat down on a stump and lit a cigarette, but my hand trembled so much I could hardly get it going. Gradually I got a bit calmer and began to think the situation over. I couldn't very well leave the lorry here. They'd find the corpses and identify Thorstein, and it wasn't easy to say what that mightn't lead to. I *could* set fire to the lorry. But it was dangerous here, just by the main road. The fire would attract people's attention, and they might succeed in putting it out, and in any case there wouldn't belong for me to get away in.

I threw the cigarette away, went out on the road, and looked round. It had already grown dangerously light, but at any rate that had the advantage of giving me a good view of the terrain.

On the other side of the road ran the railway, and I thought :

You're unpleasantly near the frontier zone, my lad. I took out my map and found I was just beside Vargasen station. It wasn't more than two hundred yards farther on, and the road where I was standing ran down to it in a steep slope. I remembered that I'd driven here before in the old days, and that there was a level crossing just beyond the station, one of the most dangerous crossings in a country famous for them. I went along the road and looked down at the station. It was deserted and dark, and no one was about. I didn't see a trace of any barriers or posts, but I thought: If you drive along this road, you're for it sooner or later.

Suddenly I heard the sound of a train approaching. I sat down on a stone beside the road and saw it steam into the station below me. It stopped, and immediately the place was alive with people. They streamed out of all the carriages and collected in a dense clump round something I couldn't see, a bit farther along the platform. I saw the steel helmets and realized it was a leave train.

The swarm down there gradually spread out into small groups, and I saw they were eating. What they'd collected round was a so-called "stew howitzer," a German field-kitchen and this was plainly the first breakfast on Norwegian soil that milords on leave were partaking of.

As I sat there watching them, I got an idea. It wasn't much of a one, and I thought to myself: Well, you might possibly use it as a last resort. I thought it over and rejected it. Then I thought a bit more; and then I got up and began to put it into practice.

I went back to the lorry and emptied Thorstein's pockets. His watch was silver, but I took it, too, for I thought his wife might like to have it. I burnt the papers in the wood, removed the two initials sewn into his shirt, and ripped out the name of the firm who'd supplied the reachmedowns. Then I just thought: Damn the bloody risk, drove the lorry on to the main road, and stopped it at the crown of the slope down towards the station and the level-crossing. And then I got out and looked at the soldiers on leave again, and waited.

The "stew howitzer" had gone now, and they stood drawn up in small groups along the platform. I heard a whistle go, and then they all got in. In one second they'd all vanished, and the engine began to gird up its loins.

I got into the lorry and started the engine, and I thought: If only they don't close the gates! There wasn't much risk of that. At this early hour they probably wouldn't bother about such precautions.

The train started to move and I let in the clutch. In the middle of the slope the lorry had got up pretty good impetus, and I didn't dare remain in it any longer. I opened the door and jumped out, banging my knee good and hard.

The train and the lorry roared forward towards the crossing simultaneously, and they met just where they should with a terrific crash. I got up and limped to the side of the road to look, but it was practically over already.

The engine of the train had driven into the heavy lorry about midships, and they'd both run off the rails. The whole caboodle was a heap of wood and wheels and iron, and it had already begun to burn. I thought: They won't find anything.

Two of the coaches had been overturned, and someone was screaming. The place swarmed with soldiers, and I heard frenzied shouts of command.

I staggered up the road again and forced myself to run, blubbering with pain and sorrow.

X V I I I

I PUT the newspaper down and sat there missing Petter. I knew I wouldn't be able to see her before eveningish, and that was O.K. She had her own fish to fry, and what she was doing wasn't without its risks. I didn't like to think of it, but it was no use trying to stop her when she'd made up her mind.

I thought of what Marion had said, and that it might be all very well when applied to any other girl, but not when the girl in question was Petter. One didn't *take* Petter. She would come the day she wanted to, and if she didn't come, there was nothing more to be done about it.

Business was slack at The Palms just then, but it suited me very well, for I'd come in to rest and get a bit of order into my thoughts. I couldn't help thinking quite a lot of Thorstein and of his wife. She'd taken it wonderfully, but it seemed as if all the light had gone out of her life, and I thought she grew ten years older in the half-hour I was in her living-room. She wouldn't accept any help, and I had to think out some way of getting it to her. She'd been glad I'd thought of the watch, and she was sitting with it in her hand when I left.

A girl passed through The Palms, and I looked at her without really seeing her. She turned round at the door and looked at me with a smile. I realized I must have been staring, and I grew red in the face and picked up the newspaper and hid myself behind it.

You may be wondering how it was that I sat here in fairly good shape. The last time we met I was haring up a slope at Vargasen and wasn't any too chirpy, and you might like to know how I got away. There was no magic in it, and it wasn't very interesting and quite laborious.

I walked quite a long way on paths through the forest, and got a lift in a milk-cart for a number of miles, and finally I took a train—that was all. There wasn't a moment of danger in it. I was only a young man in a tweed suit who'd been off on a little outing.

Jacob came in through the glass door, and that didn't exactly fill me with rapture. Jacob belonged to a chapter in my life that was over and done with, and each time I saw him it reminded me of various items I wasn't over-proud of, and would have preferred to forget.

He came up, took off his coat, sat down and said :

"Morning. Been away ? "

"A day or two," I said. "How do you know, anyway ? "

"To Ringsaker, perhaps ? "

"Ringsaker? Why Ringsaker more than any other place ? "

"Wasn't it there you said Marion lived ? "

I looked at him and thought : What the devil's he driving at ? He sat there toying with a cigarette, but he looked side-long at me, and I didn't altogether like his eyes. He might conceivably mean something special.

"You seem to have got that Marion on the brain," I said.

"She wasn't as luscious as all that."

"But rich, eh ? " he said.

"Rich ? " I said. "Not that I know."

"I thought she was worth her fifty thousand," he said.

Now I knew he was getting at something, and I knew what it was, too, so I said :

"What in Hades do you mean ? "

He'd got his cigarette alight now, and blew out smoke through his nose. He was incredibly like a fox. A couple of men came in and sat down in the corner opposite us ; I knew one of them and nodded to him, and he called out :

"Hallo ! One never sees you nowadays. Got lost in the bedstraw ? "

"Just about," I said.

"Yes," he said. "I've seen her. She's not so bad."

"Thanks," I said. "I'll tell her from you you're satisfied."

Jacob said :

"Did you ask what I meant ? "

"Just that," I said.

"Well, what d'you think?"

"Oh, drop it!" I said. "Either speak out or shut up. I haven't time for all this messing about."

"No, you're a very busy man, of course," he said.

I thought of something Thorstein had said about a little chap he hadn't quite liked the look of. I pulled out my case and took quite a time to get my cigarette alight; I was frightened, but quite cool.

Jacob said:

"I think what you're doing is dam' sporting. I wouldn't have expected it of you. It's magnificent."

"What I'm doing?" I said. "What am I doing then, d'you think?"

"Don't put it on," he said.

"Jacob," I said. "This must be cleared up. Speak out, and let's understand one another."

"I do hope you're careful," he said. "It would be a pity if you got pinched. Pity for that Petter, too. She's deuced sweet."

He was in considerable danger of his life just then. I was only just able to keep my hands still. He was quite cool and butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, and I thought it was just as well to keep to that tone. I said:

"You bet she's sweet."

He took my newspaper, turned up the advertisements, and studied them for a bit; I waited and said nothing. Then he put it down and said:

"It's damnable the way there are no decent films."

"Yes," I said. "Have you seen *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*?"

"I don't like men with beards," he said.

"I see," I said.

He blew his smoke out carefully in a long stream and said:

"I think you are careful. I think you manage splendidly. I don't think I need be afraid on your account."

"No," I said. "I don't think you do."

"The only thing is that some bastard or other might get to hear of it," he said.

"That would be the only thing," I said.

"Someone who had a grudge against you."

"Exactly," I said. "Who would that be, d'you think?"

"There are a lot of foul people about, you know," he said.

"I suppose there are," I said.

He knocked off his ash carefully on the side of the ash-tray, and looked at me sideways.

"And fifty thousand is a lot of money, after all, isn't it?" he said.

"Depends how you look at it," I said. "It's money, anyway."

"Not for *you*, of course," he said. "You've got a lot more than that, of course."

"Bless you," I said, "I've got enough to get along with."

"And you've never been stingy either," he said.

"Certainly not," I said.

I ~~don't~~ say I liked this; I began to see where it was leading, and realized I was in a bad way. But in a sense it was rather comic. It was quite thrilling to see how long we'd walk round the hot porridge, and I was interested to see how he'd get on to the subject.

"I'll confess something to you," he said. "Something pretty foul. . . ."

"Oh?"

"When I realized who it was you'd got in your flat . . ."

He checked himself and looked at me; I said:

"Go on. Who had I got there?"

"Marion," he said.

"So what?"

"Well, to tell the truth for a moment I was tempted to earn that fifty thou."

"Naughty, naughty!" I said.

"Yes, you see I don't make myself out better than I am."

"No," I said. "That's noble of you."

"But of course it was only for a moment," he said. "An idea that merely passed through my head."

"Of course," I said.

He smoked for a bit and waited. Then he said:

"It's splendid, what you're doing. Magnificent. Heroic, quite simply."

"Thank you, thank you," I said. "Far too many bouquets."

"And I'm frightfully glad Marion arrived all right—at Ringsaker."

"Yes," I said. "I can see how glad you are."

"And it went without a hitch?" he said.

"Yes, quite," I said. "Why shouldn't it?"

"You know better than I," he said.

He'd finished his cigarette by now, and stubbed it out in the ash-tray. Then he said:

"But if I *had* given way to the temptation?"

"What temptation?"

He got quite annoyed, and said:

"All that about the fifty thou."

"Oh yes, of course," I said. "I wasn't quite following. See that little girl in the red hat over there? Not bad, eh?"

"Don't change the subject," he said. He was pretty peeved, I could see.

"Excuse me," I said. "I won't do it any more. But she *isn't* bad. Well—if you had given way . . ."

"Exactly," he said.

"Yes, but you didn't."

"No, damn you, no," he said. "How can you think such a thing?"

"I don't think it, Jacob," I said. "I know you."

He had small beads of sweat on his forehead, and his eyes weren't still a minute. Perhaps things weren't going just as he'd planned. There he sat with all the trumps, but on the other hand I could see his cards, and that's always something. I thought: "He's certainly warned the Germans to keep a look-out for a car with Marion in it. But he hasn't said anything about me. He's too much of a business man to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

He said:

"Got a fag?"

"Rather."

He lit up, and I could see he was thinking. Then he said:

"You can understand it was tempting."

I shrugged. "Why, actually?"

"Oh, you wouldn't know," he said. "You don't know what it's like to be in a hole."

"Why, Jacob," I said. "Are you in a hole?"

"One hell of a hole," he said.

"I *am* sorry."

There was another pause, and I took the paper and looked at the first page. Then I said:

"That Rommel isn't half going it in Africa."

He said:

"I thought perhaps you might lend me a little dough."

"Glad to," I said. I took out a hundred-crown note which I had in my waistcoat pocket, and said:

"Here."

He took the note and began to make a dart out of it.

"Well, that's all very nice, of course," he said.

"Yes, isn't it?" I said.

"But I'd thought of ten thousand," he said.

"Good Lord!" I said. "D'you need all that?"

"Yes," he said, "I do. For the present."

"Perhaps you're going to start a business of your own?"

"Something like that," he said. "I need the money, anyway."

"Well," I said, "one'll do a lot for old friends."

"Yes," he said. "And you know you'll get it back."

"Lord, yes," I said. "I know I can depend on you."

I got up, and it was amusing to see his reaction. He started and lifted one arm involuntarily as if he was afraid I was going to give him a thick ear. I laughed and said:

"You've got rheumatism, I see."

He went red and said:

"Yes, a slight touch. I get such a peculiar twitch in my shoulder now and then."

I nodded.

"I know. It's painful. D'you use cat-skin?"

"Cat-skin?"

"Grandma always used cat-skin. She said it helped. You staying?"

He looked as though he were in some kind of dilemma. It was plain he'd expected another and somewhat different tone, and he wasn't happy.

"Sit down," he said. "I don't think it's sensible of you to go."

"Sensible or not," I said. "I *must*. But I'll hurry."

He understood and went red again. Then he got up.

"I'll come too," he said.

"Good," I said. "It's nice to have company."

We went into the cloakroom, and I noticed he took care to let me go first. I realized he didn't mean to take any risks. I opened the door and saw the place was empty. The chapie who usually stands there in a grass-green livery and looks on while one does what one has to do, and then gets 25 ore for doing it, wasn't there for the moment, and Jacob stopped on the threshold and said:

"I'll wait outside till you're ready."

I laughed and said:

"You've grown modest with the years, Jacob."

He grunted.

I took my time and thought the thing over, and naturally it was bad, but it might have been worse. Jacob had only one motive: money. He'd made a fool of himself in the Marion business and lost fifty thousand crowns, and I can imagine that he had a pretty sceptical view of the Germans' willingness to pay. They have an unpleasant tendency to receive a report with hearty thanks, and afterwards to give

the bearer a kick in the seat and say: *Heraus!* (Get out!) So I wasn't surprised he preferred to let me pay.

When I came out he was standing gazing at himself in the glass, and he looked pretty sour. And so would I, if I'd seen what he saw. I said:

"All right, Jacob. Go a head. I'll wait for you."

"I think I won't, after all," he said.

I laughed, and we went in and sat down again. I said:

"Thanks for coming with me."

He was pretty poker-faced now, and a bit curt:

"Well, what about it?"

"God knows," I said. "*I* think England'll win. What do *you* think!"

"What about that ten thousand?"

"Oh, *that*?" I said. "That'll be all right. But I haven't got it in my pocket."

"You've got your cheque-book, haven't you?"

"Of course," I said. "And you have a fountain-pen, I see."

I wrote out a cheque for ten thousand, and he folded it up and put it in his pocket.

"Thanks," he said. "That was jolly decent of you."

"Pleasure, I'm sure," I said. "And you'll come to me when you get into another hole, won't you?"

"I sure will."

"Yes, for it would hurt me if you went to any one else."

He laughed evilly and got up.

"I know it would," he said. "It would hurt you no end."

"Yes," I said. "Because we're old friends, aren't we?"

"Like hell we are," he said, and went out.

I glanced at the clock and thought that the bank would be shut now. But to-morrow was another day, of course.

X I X

I DON'T like waiting, and I don't particularly care for what the Oslo teashops call coffee nowadays. So I was pretty sour sitting inside Samson's on Egar Square, keeping my eye on the entrance to the Agricultural Bank. It was half-past ten, and I'd already been here so long that the lady behind the counter was beginning to think I was there for the sake of her *beaux yeux*.

I thought that Jacob really might hurry up. If he was in such a hole as he said, he ought to see that he got his money a bit sooner. To tell the truth I'd expected to find him on the spot the minute the bank opened.

Actually, I was a bit surprised about Jacob. Not about his being a rascal, for deep down I'd always known that, but because he'd got as much savvy as he had. Or had he? Was he merely stupid, after all?

I thought a bit longer and discovered that that wasn't quite the point. He wasn't actually stupid, but he'd misinterpreted the situation, and above all he didn't know I'd changed quite a lot recently. He underestimated me, and he knew nothing about my companions and what they were capable of.

He probably thought he'd scared me out of my wits. And so he had, in a way. He thought I'd hidden Marion in an unwary moment, and would now agree to anything, provided it didn't leak out. And I don't suppose he thought for a moment that I could contemplate killing him. He knew me too well to think any such thing.

I looked at the clock, and for a minute I wondered if he could have gone to some other bank, but it wasn't likely. He could hardly get a cheque that size cashed without question in banks other than the one where I had my account. I ordered another coffee, and the waitress looked inquiringly at me when she removed the previous cup, which I hadn't touched either, and she indicated with one eyebrow that there might be some hope for me and that she was off at six.

And then Jacob arrived. Elegant as usual, and obviously pretty confident, with a suitcase in his hand. He looked neither to right nor left, but padded into the bank, and I got up and made a sign with my handkerchief at the window.

The lady behind the counter looked at me, as though she thought love had addled me a bit, and Gingernuts nodded to me across the street, knocked out his pipe, and went into the bank.

Well, then I could actually have taken the tram home and been done with the whole thing, but I was a bit curious, and I also rather wanted to be quite sure that Gingernuts had everything clear and didn't go and liquidate some other chap instead. So I waited a bit longer, and Jacob came out again looking very smug, and Gingernuts came out immediately afterwards, looking pretty pleased, too.

They began to walk down Karl Johan Street at a suitable distance from each other, and I said to the lady behind the counter:

"Cheeroh, miss. Don't be offended, but I must say you've got absolutely spiffing hair."

"Oh, do you think so?" she simpered.

"Yes," I said. "The one I found in the cream jug was a wonderful specimen, and I've taken the liberty of keeping it."

Then I went down Karl Johan Street too, but on the other side, and at least a hundred yards behind Gingernuts. And in the fullness of time we came to the West Station.

I thought: All the same, it doesn't look as if he was quite so sure of himself. He seems inclined for a change of air.

They went in where it said Departure Platform, and I took the other entrance and stopped behind a pillar, and saw Jacob pad out to the train. Immediately after him came Gingernuts, and he stopped by the pillar and lit his pipe.

"Well?" I said.

"He's going to Gola," he said. "So *he* thinks."

Gola. Of course. He'd always been crazy about mountain hotels. And now, of course, he could afford them.

"Righto," I said. "Happy journey."

"I'm only going as far as Lillestrom," he said.

"Be careful," I said.

"Keep your hair on, laddie."

"Do you need any money?"

"No," he said. "*He's* got that."

Petter and I were sitting at home that evening, and it was rather nice to be alone. Things had gone pretty well for her, though both loads of refugees had had to turn back the night Thorstein and I were out. They'd got them off the following night.

She took Thorstein's death hard.

"He's got a little boy, too," she said. "He was a grand chap. He was the only one of us who did all this because he felt he *must*. Because he cared for his country and the people here, and because he felt he must fight against injustice and the Terror. We're different. Otto and I do it because we think we've got something to be revenged for. Gingernuts does it mainly for the fun of the thing, I believe, and you . . ."

She stopped short and looked at me, and I said:

"I suppose I do it chiefly because I love you, Petter."

She smiled and took my hand, and said:

"That's what you think. But it's not only because of that, all the same. I wonder if I shan't soon know you better than you know yourself."

"It wouldn't surprise me," I said.

She mixed me a drink, sat down beside me on the sofa and took out a map.

"This is Grafossen here," she said. "And I've talked a bit to Otto about what we're going to do. He's a dab on skis, and you are, too, aren't you?"

"You bet."

"Here are the factories half-way up the valley. Here's where the railway goes past. Up here, about six miles from the factories, is Glitterheim Tourist Hotel, and we must begin to take a holiday there soon."

"Splendid," I said. "Are they licensed to serve spirits?"

She gave me a box on the ear, and I rumbled up her hair a bit, and there was a bit of a tussle, and I kissed her. She didn't seem to have anything directly against it, but I thought once more that Marion was wrong, and that there was still a long way to go.

There was a ring at the door. Outside stood Gingernuts. He laughed, threw himself into a chair, and stretched out his hand for a drink. I hastened to supply the necessary, and asked:

"Done?"

"Yes," said Gingernuts. "He didn't get to Gola. He had frightfully bad luck."

I think it sounds pretty cynical now, but I must admit I shuddered and wasn't very happy.

I sat down. I kept my eyes away from Gingernuts and didn't want any more details. He said:

"There was practically no one on the train. After all, it's not the season now. We happened to get into the same compartment."

I felt I was getting a bit hysterical, and said:

"If it's done, it's done. I don't know if I want to hear any more."

"There isn't much more to hear, either," he said. "He was so nosey. He simply had to lean out of the window. And on the bridge at Hoybraten he was unlucky enough to run his head against an iron post."

Petter sat rubbing my hand. I felt sick.

Gingernuts laid a bundle of notes on the table and said:

"Contribution to the war exchequer."

"You take them, Petter," I said. "No doubt they'll come in handy, somewhere."

She put them into her bag, and Gingernuts said:

"Head up, laddie. It had to be done, and I think it's a bloody good job it's been done."

Well, that was true enough, but it didn't seem to help. I said:

"All the same, it's pretty foul to kill a man."

Gingernuts put down his glass and looked at me in horror.

"What in hell are you saying?" he said. "It would never occur to me to kill a *man*!"

PART THREE

GRAFOSSEN

XX

"PETTER," I said. "You ought to go on the stage."

And I meant it. We were sitting in the bar at Glitterheim, and were pretty lit up and happy, and she impressed me so much that I almost began seriously contemplating if I dared take the risk of marrying her. After all, in a marriage it's the husband who *ought* to have the brains. There's no harm at all in the wife being a little helpless, and I've always thought it must be very sweet to have her sitting at the breakfast table asking about this and that, and letting hubby lay down the law about accumulators and dynamos and the like.

I was clear that it would be pretty much the other way round in my case.

We'd been in and out of Glitterheim constantly during these months, and were well known and quite popular, for we used money with almost indecent competency. I doubt if we were really respected, for we lived pretty high, and shocked elderly ladies.

A mountain hotel is always fairly lively, but a mountain hotel in wartime in an occupied country is enough to make one rub one's eyes and say that there ain't no such animal.

People lived up here as if each day was their last, and it seemed as if the girls quite simply vied with one another as to who could get the most scarlet reputation in the shortest possible time. And when I now said to Petter that she ought to be on the stage, it was because she'd held her own so well in this competition. One could almost say she was outside it. Every one who saw Petter now might well think she'd never had a serious thought in her life, and that she'd gone in for a good time with all the means at her disposal.

But in the mornings, when we set off on our long ski-ing trips, she was quite different. And when we came out on to the wide open spaces where we could see about three miles in all directions and knew that no hostile ear or eye had a chance of getting nearer, a new Petter appeared who knew all there was to be known about physics and chemistry and mathematics, and who made me gasp for breath.

The 17th of March had come, and the fell was a miracle of beauty. The plateau lay bathed in sun day after day, and it was like summer. I skied in bathing drawers and looked like a nigger, and when I had Petter in front of me in shorts and scanty top, looking like a little girl made of chocolate, I thought life was worth living purely for its own sake, and to tell the truth it would have been quite easy to forget Grafossen and its problems altogether.

But we were rapidly approaching zero hour. To-morrow evening was to see the last of the moonlight nights. And fourteen days ago the last part of the German plant had been installed in the underground shop of the factory, and they could begin production any time.

We, too, had not been idle. Well, that is to say, *I* had. I'd realized that calculation of distance was not my line of country, and that a thesis on the effects of trotyl pressure on a concrete foundation was beyond my powers. Or, to be quite honest, the others had quite simply assumed that I was far too big an idiot to be used in that field. So I had sacrificed myself as camouflage.

So now we were sitting here, waiting, and I was all keyed up, for I was letting myself in for something new that evening: I was to do a bit of acting.

"What's the time?" asked Petter.

"Quarter to ten," I said. "The train was on time. He'll be here any minute."

And I'd no sooner got the words out of my mouth when the door opened and Otto came in. He was in a dinner jacket, looking very handsome. All the girls gawped at him, weighed him in the balance, and found him far from wanting.

Petter and I goggled too, but took care not to indicate we knew him. That is to say, I gave a pretty loud titter and said to the world in general:

"Good Lord, what's *he* doing here?"

If I'd let down a particularly juicy worm into a hen-coop the effect would have been something similar. The girls flocked round me, ready to burst with curiosity.

"Iben," whispered a little chubby one, with red hair. "Who's that? Is he a friend of yours?"

"Friend?" I said. "I'm a bit particular about *my* friends."

I was a bit drunk, of course, and I pretended to be even more so, so there was no doubt Otto heard me, and the girls said:

"Hush, not so loud. "What's wrong with him?"

"A little Nazi," I said. "A ducky little Nazi."

That told, of course, for Glitterheim takes a pride in being a resort for Jossings, and during this season we'd only had two Quislings up to now, and they hadn't been able to stick it more than four days. We were experts in freezing out that sort.

The girls gave one glare at Otto, this time indescribably insolent, and the next thing he saw was a row of backs, poor devil—pretty backs, admittedly, but cold as icicles.

He came up to the bar, stopped beside me and asked the barkeeper for a glass of sherry. I stared impudently at him for a second; then I turned away and drew myself into myself with a movement that was meant to indicate I was a bit afraid of getting lice. The girls gave a laugh, and the conversation stopped and gave place to an expectant silence. I remembered the old Wild West films when the murder always begins that way at a bar, and where strong men first measure each other with their eyes for about a quarter of an hour, and then draw out their Smith and Wessons and go to it, whereupon the bar-tender dives under the counter and the sheriff comes in next afternoon and mops up the casualties.

Otto said:

"I believe you said something, but I'm not quite sure."

I turned round very slowly, looked him down from top to toe, and said:

"Did you say anything to me?"

"Yes," he said.

"Don't do it again," I said, turning away and taking a swig at my glass.

"Why not?" he said.

"It wouldn't be good for you," I said.

That sounds idiotic, of course, but life is like that when strong men get emotional and are seeking some pretext for opening hostilities.

"You said something about a Nazi," he said.

I turned towards him again, and thought it would be as well to settle the matter.

"Quite right," I said. "Didn't you like it?"

"No," he said. "But I suppose it's to be expected from half-drunk, spineless, Evening-Jossings like you."

Strong words, naturally. An Evening-Jossing is about the worst thing we have—it's a man who does nothing but earn money and do business with the Germans in the morning, afterwards to be unbelievably national and dripping with patriotism after office hours. In brief, just the sort of chap that all sensible people thought I was.

I got up and hit him under the ear. It isn't so easy to hit convincingly if one doesn't hit a bit hard at the same time, so I'm afraid it hurt rather. He staggered and overturned a stool, and the barkeeper said :

" Here, keep cool now."

Then Otto hit out and did it splendidly. His fist ricocheted off my shoulder and went past my chin. He could just as well have caught me one, so I was filled with sincere admiration and deep gratitude.

I said :

" Dam' Nazi, I'll kill you."

The barkeeper had now caught on, so he jumped over the bar and got between us, together with the manager and two waiters. I took the opportunity of landing the manager a left swing, for I've never liked him. Then it was all over, and the combatants retired to their respective corners and glowered at one another. Otto sat in splendid isolation while the girls fairly flocked round me and thought I'd contributed nobly to the national effort. Petter pretended to be overwhelmed with love and kissed me in the right ear, while she whispered :

" Very convincing. We'll meet in my room at twelve."

Then she got up and went out, not quite steadily, but what can one expect ?

A mountain hotel never really goes to bed properly. When the bar has closed there's always someone or other who's got a bottle of gin, and a widely ramified and sometimes pretty uproarious system of " going on somewhere " then develops round the house. The consequence is that people are shuffling round corridors for the larger part of the night, and the costumes may vary. Some still keep to their dinner jackets, others favour dressing-gowns, and I once met a gentleman tastefully enveloped in a haze of intoxication only.

As the ages have rolled by, this has often led to questions in the House from dog-collars, but for us it had its advantages. Let us say that to-morrow I retired at half-past ten, apparently in a highly inebriated condition. No one would bother about my whereabouts until next morning, if then. And if any one were to poke their nose into my room during the night and discover I wasn't in bed, it would seem only natural, and provide pleasant material for much chin-wagging at lunch next day.

Nor was there any one to check up on the conference that began at twelve this evening round the map that Petter had spread out on her bed.

Otto was in a dressing-gown, smoking a cigarette. He had

a faint blue mark where I'd hit him, and I begged his pardon.

"That's all right," he said. "That'll show them it was serious."

Petter sat curled upon the bed in a negligee I've nothing but praise for. She was the chairman of the meeting :

"We've received the final exact instructions," she said.

"They're landing to-morrow night at twelve sharp, where we decided. Naturally it's impossible to fix to the nearest foot where they'll come down, but near enough. Five to twelve you shine a light upwards. And ten past you put on the ground light and let it shine half a minute or so. That ought to be enough."

"Is all the equipment in its place?" asked Otto.

"Yes," I said. "I've buried two pairs of skis and staves, tents and sleeping-bags and provisions, and now it'll be fun to see if I can find the place again."

"And when do we blow the place up?"

"At four," said Petter. "The shifts are changed then. The night shift goes and the new gang of workmen are let in through Door A here, and march under escort down to the shop. They haven't begun any kind of production yet. They're working hectically to get the last parts of the plant installed, and reckon on being ready in a few days now, so we're on time."

"We've absolutely definite calculations of the time at our disposal. At four o'clock exactly the siren goes in the shop, the workmen fall in in two files, and a German patrol of thirty men take them under escort and march off with them. At 4.10 every one's out of the shop and the door is shut from the inside by three Germans always on guard there. They are specially trained people with all kinds of firearms, and they must be cautiously handled and naturally put out of action. The shop is soundproof, so it won't matter if you shoot."

"While the night shift marches off in this way, a rather more important ceremony is going on outside the actual entrance to the works. The next gang is marshalled here and checked thoroughly. Not only are cards and passes inspected, but every workman has to go through the vestibule, where he's stripped to the skin and dressed in an overall hanging there for him. They take no risks, and it's impossible to take anything whatever either in or out of the shop.

"At half-past four the escort takes over the new shift and marches down to the shop, where the door is again opened from the inside by the three guards at exactly 4.40. So you've got half an hour to do everything. The reason why

there's such a long interval between the shifts is that the air in the hall is used up frightfully fast, in spite of the hyper-modern ventilation system. There has to be an interval, rather like at the cinema between performances."¹

"Half an hour ought to be enough," said Otto. "But how do we get in?"

"As you can see, it's apparently quite impossible to get in at all," said Petter. "There's only one entrance, and we can dismiss that possibility at once. And there are no windows. The shop is thirty feet under ground. The air passages are too narrow.

"But there is one way.

"That explosive is prepared from different substances made in the factory sheds above ground, and two of the ingredients are sent down to the shop through a shaft and emptied into a big concrete-mixer down there. I don't know what sort of substances they are. In the English instructions they're called *acelit* and *forcin*, and that ought to do us.

"Above ground they've built two low concrete bunkers, which are well guarded and very much camouflaged. It's the one at the south end of the works that interests us; it's used for consignments of *forcin*.

"Naturally the bunker's locked and guarded, but that's where our celebrated friend Heinz Riekenheimer comes in. He's an Oberleutnant and declares he's an idealist, and in his opinion the world will get on quite as well without that explosive which is to be made at *Grafossen*. He considers the invention to be the work of the devil, and he's right there. Moreover, his idealism has been stimulated by a promise of fifty thousand crowns, and we've also undertaken to get him safely out of the country whenever he wants to go. Is that clear?"

"D'you think we can rely on him?" said Otto.

Petter shrugged her shoulders.

"We're forced to take the chance," she said. "But I don't think it would be such a good idea to tell him that we're destroying the works so that England shall have sole rights in the explosive."

"And we're meant to go down through that shaft?"

"Exactly, and it can be done. You'll go down without being able to help it, and to get up again you'll use a rope that you fasten in the upper end and take with you. The dimensions ought to be all right. Riekenheimer has made the journey, and he's fatter than you are."

¹ Cinema performances are not continuous in Scandinavia, and there are as a rule only two, *i.e.*, in the evenings.—*Translator's Note.*

"We must hope the gents from London aren't too corpulent, then," I said.

"Don't worry," said Petter. "I've ordered them to measure."

X X I

I FELT almost inclined to laugh a little as I followed Otto in the pitch darkness over the plateau. It was a bit comic to think that the most perilous thing we'd done so far was to set our watches by Big Ben in London. Petter's wireless is a snappy apparatus, and you have to study it pretty carefully to see it isn't a work-box, but all the same I don't like her having it.

For the rest, everything had gone without a hitch. Otto and I had spent the day shunning one another and glaring at one another from a distance, and at half-past ten at night I was so fantastically drunk that it was a subject of conversation at the hotel. I was taken to bed by Petter and a well-meaning wholesale dealer in ladies' stockings from Halden, and after that Petter went down to flirt into the small hours, while I locked my door, put on the white camouflage costume, and let myself down into the heap of snow under the balcony.

The night was calm and absolutely pitch black. Not a star in the sky. We were completely invisible in our white anoracks¹ and trousers, and I positively couldn't see Otto in front of me. He covered the ground quickly, and it was plain he was a good skier.

The man and the compass were my job, and it was an easy one, for I had skied about here so long that I knew it as well as my own sitting-room. The time was a quarter to twelve, and I stopped and said :

"Here we are, and now all that's left is to wait."

Otto said :

"I forgot my belt. I'm a bit cold."

"Take mine," I said. "I've got far too much on."

We stood beside one another without batting an eyelid, resting on our staves, and waited with our eyes on our watches.

"Five to," said Otto. He clicked on his pocket-lamp and sent the beam of light straight up into the air.

I didn't like that particularly. It was true that the chance of a German being here on this plateau was very small indeed, but they sometimes happened to have a night fighter up. I followed the hands of my watch and said :

"Twelve exactly."

¹ Loose hooded coat, used here for purposes of camouflage in the snow ; can also be used as a protection from the wind.

And at the same moment we both heard the buzz. Very faintly. The plane was obviously high up. Then the buzz vanished altogether, and I imagined he was now dropping down to the right height with the engine shut off. That meant he'd seen our light.

"Put it out," I said. "It's served its purpose."

We stood straining our eyes, but there was nothing to see, and not a sound could be heard. Five past twelve came, and I wondered where our aeroplane had got to.

Then I suddenly heard the roar of the engine again, much lower but far away to the north of us. I realized that the pilot had dropped his passengers and had sailed a good way down over the valley with his engine shut off. If the Germans heard him now, they wouldn't have heard him over Grafossen, at any rate, and there was little risk that they'd put two and two together.

"This looks like going well," said Otto. "They know their stuff."

"Ten past," I said. "Light the torch again."

This was the worst moment. I grant you one feels pretty lonely and safe up on the plateau, but all the same it needs quite a bit of nerve to stand there playing Twinkle-twinkle with a strong pocket-torch that seems to be shouting Here I am! to all interested.

We didn't have to twinkle long. One minute later two brief flashes came from farther over the plateau, and Otto put the torch in his pocket and stuck his staves in the snow.

"There they are," he said. "Come on."

We didn't see them till we'd got right up to them. They were sitting on their parachutes smoking cigarettes, and both their clothes and the parachutes and the huge sacks they had with them were gleaming white. I thought I'd be witty and said:

"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

"Not at all," said one of them, getting up. "I'm Lieutenant Alec Graham, and this is Sergeant Willie Saunders."

We stood close to one another and surveyed each other as well as we could for the darkness, and I thought it was quite likely these boys had never heard of Stanley. They were so amazingly young that I was almost frightened. Graham could hardly have been more than twenty-two, and the sergeant seemed a mere child, though admittedly a pretty tough child. He was tall and thin, with almost white eyebrows, and I thought he'd been made to run down through a pipe. Graham was shorter and had a little red moustache, and both of them

were as composed as if we'd met here for a game of tennis.

They said they'd had a good journey and that this seemed to be a beautiful country, and Saunders in particular was interested in the possibilities of trout-fishing in the summer. We agreed that he should come over as soon as he'd settled Hitler's hash, and we'd all make a fishing-trip together.

We buried the parachutes in the snow, and it took a little time to find their skis. But at half-past twelve we were ready to start, and this was far too early, of course. So we made a hollow in the snow and put up the tent I'd had placed out here. It wasn't particularly cold, so we sat on top of the sleeping bags, and I gave them a drink.

We sat close together, shining our torches on one another and getting a bit better acquainted, and Graham said :

"It was decent of you two gentlemen to give us such a warm reception. I hope sport'll be good."

"Sure to be," I said. "Have you got the necessary with you?"

"What d'you think that is?" he said, pointing to the sacks. "Everything's been worked out in advance, and we know exactly what we're to do."

"Guns?" said Otto. "We must bump off a German or two."

Graham pulled down the zip fastener on his anorack and showed us his tommy-gun. It was a natty little instrument, and I began to feel good. These boys had nothing to learn about their business, and it didn't look as if they knew what nerves were. Saunders yawned a couple of times, and politely begged pardon. Then he crept into the sleeping-bag and fell asleep at once. He looked like a contented child without a trouble in the world.

We sat talking to Graham; he was a nice fellow, but not particularly bright. He liked the war and believed they were going to win it soon. He hadn't gone through so much himself, he said, but at any rate he'd been at Dieppe. I said I thought he'd be able to go through a whole lot of jolly things before the whole thing was over, but he smiled and shook his head, and said he didn't think so.

We went down from the plateau through Grajuvet, and my heart was in my mouth. Graham and Saunders refused to let us take the sacks; they'd had orders to look after them personally, and stuck to them. Otto went first, then Saunders, then I, and Graham brought up the rear. I must admit I was pretty impressed by them.

The run is dangerous even in daylight, and we made it in complete darkness. It goes down practically sheer in some places, and when it enters the forest above Grafossen there are a number of bends that can make the hair of quite good skiers stand on end. But everything went swimmingly till we were almost down, and I was already thinking it was time for a sigh of relief.

Then all I saw of Saunders was a pair of heels in front of me in a cloud of snow. There wasn't time to swerve aside, so I jumped and flew right over the sack he had on his back, thinking as I did so: Now you're bound straight for the skies.

I threw myself round, and at that moment Graham came roaring along and stopped most elegantly just short of Saunders. Saunders got on to his feet, looked at the sack, and said to Graham:

"Well, it didn't explode, anyway, sir."

Graham nodded and replied very coolly:

"So I perceive."

I thought that Englishmen were queer birds and no mistake, and that it wouldn't surprise me if they went and won the war.

Otto stopped down among the trees, and we gathered round him.

"We'd better watch our step now," he said. "I think we ought to go the last few hundred yards separately and meet at the edge of the wood. It isn't far from there to the works, and you never know if they haven't got patrols out."

I went first, and everything looked fairly peaceful down there. The works were blacked out, of course, so I saw them only as huge dark silhouettes in front of me. The forest round about had been carefully thinned, so we had to cross an open patch to get up to Door H, where we hoped to find Riekenheimer. I knew that if the guards up in the door over the entrance discovered anything, the floodlights would be on in double quick time and we'd have a pretty unpleasant encounter with their machine-guns. The time was half-past three.

Graham came out of the forest and threw himself down beside me, and shortly afterwards we were all lying there reviewing the situation. The works had a threatening aspect and gave out a deep growling sound; they reminded me of a great animal lying in wait and saying: Come on if you dare!

"We'll have to crawl, gentlemen," said Graham. And there was undeniably a great deal in that.

It wasn't much fun. It was lengthy and laborious, and no one can imagine how gruesome it is to crawl nearer and nearer, while the whole time one's expecting to feel the first bullet in one's back. Without the white clothes it would have been hopeless. As things now were, Graham and Saunders looked like two small heaps of snow under their sacks, and we had only to hope that none of the guards would discover that the heaps were getting closer and closer. Otto and I wriggled forward and were practically invisible in the snow, but it occurred to me that we were leaving tracks as we crept along, and that it wouldn't need more than one little flash from the floodlights for the guards to see pretty clearly that all was not as it should be.

Suddenly I saw that Graham and Saunders had stopped. They lay silent as the grave, and I stretched out my hand and stopped Otto. We lay scattered about and pressed our heads into the snow. I heard a voice that almost made my heart stand still, it seemed so close, and it said:

"Es is eigentlich nicht so kalt." (It isn't really very cold.)

I peeped through the eyelashes of one eye—I quite simply couldn't help it—and saw two grey shadows pass right across the opening not fifty yards away from us. I saw the steel helmets and the barrels of the rifles sticking up beyond their backs. They walked quickly over the field along the barbed-wire fence, and disappeared into the darkness to the right.

And then Graham and Saunders began crawling on again. I looked at my watch. It was a quarter to four, and I had a feeling that now they couldn't help seeing us. The watch-tower stood thirty yards to the right of the entrance, and just before I crawled into the shadow of the fence and got out of the guard's line of vision, I caught a glimpse of him up there. I saw only a white oval under the helmet, but I had the impression that he was standing there looking straight down at me.

We were now all of us lying by the fence, right by the entrance, and Otto whispered:

"Don't touch the barbed wire. There may be an electric current in it."

The door creaked a bit, and I realized it had been opened slightly. Then I saw a gleam of light rather like when someone tries to light a cigarette but blows out the match instead. I whistled, so extremely faintly that I could hardly hear it myself, and I thought I'd have to do it again. But then I saw the door slowly open, and next moment a German Ober-

leutnant was crouching in the snow beside me. He was in full war paint, with his gorget on his chest. I lay flat on the ground in front of him, and he stuck his mouth right into my ear. I've never been so intimate with a German before, and with God's help it shall never happen again. He whispered : "Here's the key to the bunker. There are three men in there."

I nodded and took the key, and he went on :

"I shall lie down now. Tie me up and put the gag on."

I nodded again, and he lay down on his belly in front of me. Otto had the straps ready, and I bound him hand and foot and shoved a handkerchief into his mouth and tied another round his chin. Otto crawled up beside me and helped to pour snow over him with our hands.

After a bit he looked like a pretty convincing heap of snow, but it was four o'clock by that time, too, and Otto whispered :

"Quick, now, through the entrance."

That wasn't such fun, either. I expected every minute to see the floodlights flare up in the tower. But nothing happened, and I thought they kept pretty poor watch and that the chap up there must be thoroughly tired.

There was snow inside the entrance, too, but it was considerably more trodden down, and every now and then we came to bare patches and wheel marks that were a bit dangerous to pass. We pressed ourselves up against the big engine-shed and followed the wall in towards the works, and just when we were about to turn the corner, Graham, who went first, stopped so suddenly that I rammed my nose into his sack and thought : I wonder how much it takes to make trotyl explode.

He stood still as a mouse, and next moment a large German came along round the corner and ran straight into his arms. I didn't see what Graham did, but the man gave a faint grunt and collapsed between his hands.

Graham laid him down by the wall and whispered to me :

"A close shave. There's the bunker."

We stepped over the dead German, and I saw Graham wipe his knife on his trousers and put it into his pocket.

The bunker was well-situated in the shadow of the engine-shed, and we didn't need to crawl. Graham stopped at the door, and we pressed ourselves up against the wall and listened to him. He had taken the lead now, and ours but to do and die.

"You unlock it, sir," he said to me. "Saunders and I'll go in first."

I put the key in the door, and a faint ray of light fell out when it opened. Graham and Saunders were inside with their guns ready before I had time to blink, and when Otto and I got in and we'd shut the door and reviewed the situation there were three Germans with their hands up along the wall. One of them had half a Frankfurt sausage in his fist, and the other half was just falling out of his open mouth.

Graham spoke German to them :

"We are British Commando troops and you are to consider yourselves prisoners of war. I see that you with the moustache are a sergeant, and I'll ask you to observe that this is a regular act of war carried out by His Majesty's regular troops, as our uniforms show."

He pulled down his zip fastener and climbed out of the white clothes, and Saunders did the same. Otto and I had no uniforms, so we thought it as well to keep our things on and say as little as possible.

The Germans looked as if you could have knocked them down with a feather, and Otto and I set about tying them up. When we were about to gag the sergeant, he found his tongue again and said :

"It's contrary to international law to tie up prisoners of war."

"I know you Germans are experts in international law," said Graham. "But eat up the handkerchief now like a good boy, all the same."

And then the sergeant didn't say any more. We laid them in a row on the floor, and I looked at my watch and it said ten past four.

That bunker was a pretty neat piece of work, and it was clear that the system with the shaft must save an amazing lot of time and transport for them. From outside the bunker seemed to have only one entrance, but I saw that one wall was constructed to be swung up like a great door, and they could drive in large consignments of that forcin and merely send it down through the shaft opening. Everything was shipshape and clean and still unused, and I was as excited as a schoolboy over that ride down into the dark.

"Let's get a move on," said Graham. He got his tommy-gun ready and crept into the opening of the shaft.

"Follow me, Sergeant," he said, and disappeared.

Saunders and I got to the opening at the same time, and I said :

"After you, Sergeant."

"Thank you, sir," he said, and disappeared into the depths.

Otto had hunted out the rope and tied it round the first sack.

"Off with you," he said. "I'll let the sacks down to you afterwards."

It was an odd journey, and it had its charm. If you've ever been at a fair and gone down one of those helter-skelters, where it's dark as night and the women have no inhibitions about screaming, you'll have some idea of what I went through then. The shaft was pretty roomy, and it sloped in a pleasant angle downwards, but I thought it might be quite a business to hoist oneself up by the rope when the job was done.

I suppose I'd been sliding about thirty-six or forty feet when the ground disappeared under my backside and for a moment I flew through space, after which I landed with a pretty painful bump on a concrete floor. It was half dark, and I realized I was sitting in the large mixer. It was a cylinder about thirty-four feet in diameter and fifteen feet high. It was empty and clean, and I felt as though I were sitting all on my lonesome on a dancing-floor.

And then they began shooting like mad right over my head. I looked up and saw that an iron ladder led up to the rim of the concrete tub. I ran up to it and began to climb it, and before I'd reached the top the shooting was over.

Graham and Saunders were sitting on the three-foot rim of the container with their smoking guns in their hands, and I looked down at three dead Germans.

They'd obviously been taken completely unawares, and only one of them had had time to shoot. But he'd hit, too. Graham was bleeding from a wound in the arm, but it didn't look as though he bothered about it much, for he laughed contentedly and said :

"And now for the luggage."

"It's on the way," I said.

When Otto and I had got the sacks down, all that was actually left to do was to sit down and admire. Otto climbed down with the others by the ladder on the outside of the mixer, but I remained sitting up there on the rim, swinging my legs, for all this was rather beyond me.

Graham and Saunders went to work like professionals, with such lightning speed and precision that I realized that they must have got up that speed in England by practising over and over again. It's just as well I don't make a fool of myself trying to describe that plant, for I didn't understand more of it than that it was complicated and must have cost a tidy pile to set up. Saunders unpacked the explosive from

the sacks with both hands. It was ready in packets of different sizes, and each packet was carefully numbered.

Graham ran round the shop putting them in their places. When he passed me with a specially big packet for the foundation, he laughed and said :

"Take a cigarette while you're waiting, sir. We'll be ready in a jiffy."

I looked at my watch. It was twenty-five past four, and I said :

"Quarter of an hour left, chaps."

"Fine," said Graham, collecting the leads from all his packets into the middle of the floor. He connected them with his detonator and smiled at Saunders :

"Have I forgotten anything, Sergeant ?"

"I don't think so, sir."

"All right. Up you go again."

I'd already got my leg on the iron ladder to go down into the mixer, but stopped as Graham went on :

"Thanks for all you've done, gentlemen. You've been very helpful, and I wish you all the best. And remember me to all at home, Saunders."

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant.

"What in the devil does this mean ?" said Otto. "Are you intending to stay here ?"

Graham laughed.

"Someone's got to switch the current on, sir," he said.

I sat up there on the mixer with my legs dangling, and I thought : There's certainly nothing of the yellow streak about that chap. I remembered I'd been surprised he'd had so little faith in the possibility of more exciting experiences in the future, but now I understood it better. He was quite simply going to be blown up with the whole plant, and he'd known that ever since he took the job on. Saunders had known it too.

Otto said :

"Isn't it just a question of pulling down that lever ?"

"Yes," said Graham. "But it won't pull itself down, you know."

"Let me do it," said Otto. He was pale and very serious, and there was a fanatical light in his eyes.

Graham stopped smiling, and he didn't look so young any longer.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "But it's my obvious duty to blow the place up myself."

"That's idiotic," said Otto. "You aren't much more

than twenty. I'm thirty-five, and more through with everything than any one knows. Let me do it."

Graham shook his head and said :

"Go up now. There's very little time. That's an order."

Saunders immediately began to climb up the ladder. He climbed down the other side and began to pull himself up the shaft by the rope. It was pretty simple, and he'd soon disappeared.

When I looked down at the other two again, Otto was standing there with his revolver in his hands. He said :

"To the devil with your duty, Lieutenant. Get up that shaft."

Graham looked round. He'd put down his tommy-gun while he'd been working, and had small prospects of getting hold of it again.

Otto said :

"I see your point, and you're a damned brave fellow. But it would be sheer madness, and you ought to see that. Besides, it's my country and so I consider it to be my job. Get on up!"

"Surely you see that I can't let you do it?" said Graham.

"You *must*," said Otto. "If you argue any longer, it'll end up by not getting done at all."

I said :

"Come on, Lieutenant. He means it."

Otto looked at me and said :

"And don't you think I'm right, Iben? Be honest, now."

I thought a second and said :

"Yes, to be quite honest, I think you're right."

"Fine," he said.

Graham looked at him for a moment or two ; then he turned on his heel, walked quickly to the ladder, and climbed up. He didn't look round again ; just went down into the mixer and began pulling himself up through the shaft.

Otto said :

"Now he's offended."

I felt I wanted to cry, but I looked at my watch, and it was already twenty-five to five. I said :

"Good-bye, Otto."

"Good-bye."

When I got into the bunker Graham was standing there pulling on his white camouflage again. Saunders was already dressed, and was helping him with his arm. Graham was quite composed, and it was impossible to determine whether he felt relieved or furious that he hadn't been the one to pull down the lever. He said :

"There's no point in crawling now. We'll have to run like the deuce, and I think we'll wait till the explosion and the confusion comes."

I looked at my watch. It was eighteen minutes to five.

I don't quite know what I'd expected, but the explosion seemed a most puny affair up here. The detonation came violently enough up the shaft, but I hardly noticed any shaking, and I looked at the Englishmen in panic. Graham said :

"Keep calm. It's quite all right. Everything's gone to blazes."

Saunders opened the door, and we ran out into the darkness. We took the way back by the engine-shed, and we hadn't gone five steps before all the alarm sirens of the works started going off. When we ran through the entrance to the big shed it opened and three Germans tumbled out into the darkness, gun in hand. Graham and Saunders were a little in front of me, and were already getting near the entrance where we'd deposited Riekenheimer. I was a bit behind, and the last German flew right on top of me as he came out.

"Was ist los?" (What's the matter?) he yelled.

"Ich weiss nicht" (I don't know), I yelled back, and believe it or not, he galloped on in the darkness without looking at me once.

But I didn't exactly take him to see the comic side of the situation. I ran towards the entrance at a terrific speed and caught the Englishmen up just as Graham tore open the gate and rushed out. Saunders was just following him when the floodlights from the tower suddenly flamed out, and we saw Graham out in the courtyard full tilt towards the wood. Next minute the machine-guns let fly up above. He lifted his arms above his head and pitched forward, and then he didn't move any more.

I took Saunders by the arm and pulled him back, and we pressed up against the gate-post. The machine-gunning went on, and I saw that the fire was directed farther forward, towards the wood. Then the shooting stopped, and a voice roared in German from the tower :

"They've escaped into the forest. After them."

Saunders and I ran blindly back in between the sheds, and for my part I was absolutely panic-stricken and hadn't a single clear thought. Behind us the machine-gun was at it again, a short rattling series, and now and then we heard roars of command, and the sound of many running feet.

Suddenly I saw a narrow lane directly to the right. It ran

between two long low buildings, and it was at all events dark there. Saunders saw the lane at the same time, and we tore into it and ran with bent heads along the wall of one of the buildings. My brain began working again, but it didn't make much of the situation. I thought: This is madness. We're only burying ourselves in the place and will never get out again.

Suddenly Saunders stopped short and pulled me down. I heard the heavy tramp of soldiers' boots, and the next moment a German came round the corner right along the lane where we were lying. He was obviously following the sound of the shots and looked neither to right nor left, but just as he ran past he turned his head and his eye lit on us.

He stopped short and remained standing a second with open mouth, glaring at us. I had hardly had time to get up on one knee, and was fumbling for my gun when he was on top of me. He had a bayonet on his rifle and got me in the shoulder just as Saunders fired.

My assailant pulled out the bayonet and stood quite still a second; then the rifle fell from his hands and he sank on to his knees, and then the top of his body slumped forward and his helmet thudded against the ground. Then he pitched over on to his side and remained lying there.

I felt nothing, but I saw the blood spreading over my white anorack. I thought it was deuced odd it didn't hurt.

Saunders was standing over me, whispering hurriedly:

"Come here, Can you walk? This is a barracks, and it has no cellar."

He took hold of my sound arm, and half pulled me with him under the building. The barracks stood on four blocks of concrete, and there was about a foot and a half between the floor and the ground. I crawled in and thought that here we were caught like rats in a trap, and no mistake.

Saunders ran off, came back almost at once, and said: "Take hold, sir."

I stretched out my hand and got hold of a leg in a thick boot; and pulled with all my might. Saunders pushed, and the next moment we were lying beside one another under the barracks with the dead German in front of us.

And now I began to feel things. The blow must have paralysed the nerves for the first minutes, but now it felt as though I had a red-hot iron through my shoulder. Everything went black, and I groaned.

Saunders put his hand over my mouth, and said:

"Quiet, sir. I'll look at it in a minute."

I clenched my teeth and concentrated my thoughts on not yelling. I shut my eyes and bored my head into the frozen ground, and the ice-cold sensation on my forehead helped a bit. I felt him slit up the anorack and my pullover and shirt, and take me hard by the arm and turn me over on my back. Then came the excruciating sting when he poured iodine into the wound. I opened my eyes and tried to say something, and then I don't remember any more.

XXII

PETTER was bending over me, smiling, and I was lying on my back in a bed. Her face came closer and closer, and I hoped she was going to kiss me. But suddenly it wasn't Petter at all, but Shark-jaw in a Tyrolean hat and a mackintosh, and he stretched out his hands and curved them like claws, and they came nearer and nearer to my throat. I tried to scream, but couldn't get out a sound, and I couldn't move. And then the hands met round my throat, and I felt he was strangling me.

I opened my eyes and heard Saunders's voice :

"I was forced to do it, sir. You were raving."

He was lying half on top of me, gripping my arms firmly. Now he grinned and loosened his hold a bit, and I passed my sound right hand over my face. I had a handkerchief tightly bound over my mouth. I waved my hand feebly, and he grinned and took the gag away. I drew a deep breath and whispered :

"What's the time ? "

"Half-past twelve."

My temples were pounding and I felt rotten, and my shoulder hurt horribly. I forced myself to count and found I'd been unconscious seven hours. Unless . . . ?

"Day or night ? "

He laughed.

"Day," he said. "You've been kicking up a hell of a row, sir."

"It's confoundedly cold here," I said.

"Might have been worse, sir."

I shut my eyes, and thought. By this time Petter would know it had gone wrong. No doubt she thought we were dead, and I wondered if she minded very much. We *were* as good as dead, as far as that went.

I hoped she'd manage everything all right, and I didn't doubt it much. We'd thought out everything, and even

if they realized why I'd disappeared, they wouldn't find any proof that Petter was anything but a giddy little flirt who'd gone round with me because I had a lot of money. She'd play the part to the end.

I thought of my comfortable bed at Glitterheim, and that it was nearly lunch-time now, and every one would be taking the words out of every one else's mouth. And anyway, the Gestapo would already be there putting two and two together. That was the end of Iben Holt, the end of the harmless, slightly fatuous lounge lizard whom no one could suspect. Now I was a wanted saboteur who was lying freezing to death under a barracks, while the Germans combed the forest and the plateau for me.

"They'll find our skis, of course," I said.

"Very likely, sir."

"And then no doubt they'll wonder what's happened to that johnny."

I stretched out my hand and felt the German. He was as stiff as a board.

"Bound to, sir."

"And *then* they'll soon realize that we can't be so very far away. We haven't much chance, Willie."

"No, sir."

"Don't say sir," I said. "My name's Iben."

"Eeben?" he said. "Right. It wouldn't hurt if you spoke a bit lower, sir."

I gave up. He was certainly not more than twenty, and no doubt regarded me as an elderly gentleman to whom all respect was due, and if we were to land up in hell together, there too he would no doubt open the oven-door for me with a bow and say: This way, sir. Well, that was his look-out. At any rate, he was as calm as if he were sitting in his own drawing-room at home, and I thought that it would be difficult to find a better and more resolute chap for a companion in a situation like this.

I thought over the whole of the previous night, and realized that it was no less than incredible how well it had gone. Everything on the dot, everything according to plan, just as they had calculated in Oslo and London several months ago.

Well, perhaps not everything. Graham was dead. Otto was dead. And we were at any rate half dead. Perhaps it hadn't gone off quite so marvellously, after all.

"Are you hungry?"

"Yes, sir."

"As a hunter?"

" Yes, sir."

" Me too."

I lay and dozed for a bit again, and felt how tired and weak and ill I was. It was quite quiet ; only the humming sound from the works came faintly into us.

" Doesn't any one live in the floor above us ? " I asked.

" Yes, sir," he said. " I think it's a workmen's gang. It was pretty lively up there about seven this morning ; I suppose they were going to work then."

A workmen's gang. Of course, yes. German soldiers have cellars under their barracks, as all buildings should have for a Scandinavian winter. It's only Norwegian workmen who have to put up with buildings like this one. Norwegian workmen. . . . *How* Norwegian ?

I shut my eyes again and wondered if I was beginning to get some kind of idea, or if I was merely wandering.

" I say," I said. " Has no one hit on the idea of looking for us in this part of the world ? "

" I've thought of that too, sir. It doesn't look as if they've thought of the possibility of our still being here in the works. Shall I have another look at your wound, sir ? "

He took the bandage off carefully, and I twisted my head and took a survey. It didn't look too bad, a neat, red mark, but evidently some of the muscles in the shoulder hadn't come off too well, for my left arm hung stiff and useless along my side, and it didn't stop hurting a minute. Saunders got out his first-aid and went to work as though he'd never done anything else but patch people up, and when he'd been at it a bit, it got too much for me, and I fainted again.

When I woke up approximately five thousand people were tramping about over my head—at least that's what it sounded like. I'd forgotten for the moment where I was, and it had been rather pleasant. I wasn't so over-joyed when it dawned on me that no miracle had happened yet, and it was still cold, and that future prospects were gloomy.

" What's that ? " I said.

" The workmen have come back, sir. I think they're going to have their midday meal. It's one o'clock."

We lay and listened to them. It was impossible to distinguish the voices—it was just a jumble of talk, but I thought it sounded pretty Norwegian, and an idea began to take shape in my mind.

" Look here, Saunders," I said. " It's pure idiocy to go on lying here."

"Yes, sir," he said.

"When the night frost comes we'll probably freeze to death, and anyway we'll be forced to crawl out and show ourselves sooner or later."

He nodded.

"We must see to it that we get hold of a few clothes and try and get out of this bloody place."

"Exactly, sir."

"Then we're of one mind," I said. "I'd thought of going up and paying my respects to the chaps in this barracks!"

"Yes, sir."

It was impossible to coax forth the least trace of emotion in that winsome baby face. I said:

"It'll probably end by our both being shot, but of course you'd have no objection to that?"

"Oh yes, sir," he said, with a grin. "It would annoy me a lot."

I decided to wait until two. I assumed that the dinner-hour would be over by then, and the men would go back to their work. It shouldn't be quite impossible to sneak into the barracks then, and there was always a chance of finding some kind of garment that Saunders could put on. As to what course we should then pursue I had no idea, and I was altogether too tired to give it a thought.

Sure enough, at two o'clock the sirens went again, and it grew lively overhead. There was the heavy clump of many boots to and fro over the floor, then a buzz of talk from the lane beside us, and finally silence. I waited ten more minutes; then I began slowly crawling towards the light outside. It was painful, and I had to set my teeth not to give up at once. I crawled sideways, dragging my left arm after me, and after a few minutes that seemed to last for ever I'd arrived, and cautiously poked my head out under the barracks wall.

As far as I could see it was O.K. The lane stretched silent and empty, and the building opposite seemed to be the mate of our own—also a workmen's barracks where they slept and ate between shifts. There were two windows in the wall immediately above me, and I didn't like that much, but there was nothing to be done about it.

I rolled forward in the snow and crawled slowly on to my knees, but fell flat again at once, and had to lie there a few minutes, recovering.

This wasn't too good. I lay there fully and gapingly visible, and if any one came along I was done for. Fear gave

me strength, and I heaved myself up again and staggered drunkenly to the door of the barracks. It was unlocked. I opened it, slipped in, and shut it quickly behind me.

When I turned round, a chap was standing there looking at me, and I stuck my hand into my pocket for my gun. He was a broad-shouldered little fellow with a brown moustache; he had a big kitchen-apron on and a frying-pan in his hand, and he looked pretty taken aback. I said:

"Keep quiet or I'll shoot."

He dropped the frying-pan, and it made a frightful row when it got to the floor. Then he put up his hands. I said:

"That's not necessary. I'm a friend if you are."

He sat down in slow bafflement on a stool beside the fire, and said:

"Gawd almighty, are you one of the Englishmen?"

I liked his face and thought he looked pretty O.K., so I said: "Yes. And we need a bit of help."

That didn't seem to alarm him, either. There wasn't a trace of fear in his face now, and he seemed to be enjoying himself more than anything.

"They're looking for you out on the plateau and far down in the valleys," he said. "And you're here all the time!"

"If you're a true Norwegian you'll help us get away," I said.

He got up, went to the door, and looked out. Then he shut it and put down the cross-bar, and then he hung a sack in front of the window.

"You wounded?" he said.

"A bayonet prick," I said. "It's nothing to speak of. Can you let us have some clothes?"

"Sure," he said. "Though it'll only be overalls."

"That'll do fine," I said. "I've a friend who needs them still more than I do. He's only got his English uniform, and that's not the best outfit for these parts."

He laughed and went over to the stove.

"Hungry?"

It wasn't necessary to answer that. I could only just stop myself from leaping right into the pot, and it didn't take more than five minutes to polish off most of the lentils¹ left from the midday meal. He looked at me and gave a satisfied laugh.

"I'm the cook here," he said. "The others won't be coming back before seven, and then they only change, and we all go home."

¹ A thick broth made with lentils, and sometimes eaten with cooked pork, is a very popular dish in Scandinavia in all classes.

"Home?" I said. "I thought you had to live here."

"Not us," he said. "Only a couple of German specialists working in the mystery shop."

He obviously remembered something amusing, for he began to chuckle.

"You've been up to your tricks in that shop, I'll be bound," he said. "The Germans are so furious that it stinks of sweat all over the place. And all we lads go round shouting Hurray! for all we're worth. But we don't shout out loud, of course."

Well, that was absolutely the right spirit, so I grinned at the man and said:

"Let's have a look at the wardrobe, then."

We went into the mess-room, where a motley collection was hanging round the walls. I took off my bloodstained anorack and trousers and pulled a pair of well-worn overalls over my ski-ing costume. It was incredible how much that did. The clothes made me feel almost safe. The cook took my discarded rig and stuffed it into the stove and burnt it.

Then he said:

"You look just like one of the lads. Why don't you lie down by the fire and take a nap? No Germans ever come here, hardly."

"But I've got my friend lying under the barracks," I said. "He also needs a new suit and a few pounds of lentils and a bit of warmth. I'll go and fetch him."

I took a step or two towards the door, but the cook stopped me.

"Don't do that," he said. "You look as if you might conk out any minute, and you might meet someone outside, too. There are so many guards about that you never really know where you are with 'em. I'm going out in any case to empty the scraps."

He took a large pail which was standing by the stove, and went to the door.

"I know a bit of English," he said. "I was at sea in the old days. What's your pal's name?"

"Saunders," I said. "Just stick your head in and say Saunders, and he'll come all right."

The cook padded out with the pail, and I lifted the sack in front of the window a little, and watched him. He walked calmly along the lane, and close by the house wall he suddenly stumbled and upset the pail. He bent down and picked up the rubbish again. It all looked very natural. I thought we'd been lucky again and that this was a deuced plucky chap we'd run up against.

Half a minute later the door creaked, and there stood Saunders. He was quite calm but a little breathless; I gathered he'd made the distance to the door in record time.

"Off with your uniform," I said.

He skinned off the white camouflage, and I shoved it into the stove. Then came the uniform, and that went the same way. He found an overall among the garments on the wall, and I breathed more easily.

"The prospect's brightening," I said. "Not much, but a little."

The cook came in again with his empty pail; he gave a broad grin.

"We were in luck," he said. "If we'd been a couple of minutes later . . ."

He pointed to the window and I peeped out. A patrol of four men were walking down the lane. I held my breath with fright, but they didn't so much as glance at the barracks, but walked straight past.

"This may be dangerous for you," I said to the cook.

He laughed, and gave an eager nod.

"You bet," he said. "It may be bloody dangerous." He looked at Saunders and said:

"Eat something, boy?"

Saunders grinned and said:

"Thanks very much. I haven't had any lunch yet."

He pitched into the lentils, and I said to the cook:

"Not much of the coward about you, is there?"

He sat down on the stool, took up the frying-pan, and began wiping it out.

"Well, I look at it like this," he said. "When chaps like you come in here and blow up factories sky-high on those swine, I'd have to be pretty yellow if I was afraid of helping you a bit."

I was terribly tired. My head was pounding and my ears ringing, and I sat down on the floor beside the stove and leant against the wall. The stove was red, and the wood crackled pleasantly in it. My eyes shut of themselves; I felt I was falling asleep and pulled myself together for a moment.

"D'you think we can take forty winks, then?" I asked.

"Lord, yes," said the cook. "I'll keep a look-out. But no one will come, anyway."

He put a sack under my head, and forced me gently down full length on the floor. The heat permeated my frozen

body and filled me with an indescribable well-being, and I shut my eyes and slept.

I was awakened by the cook standing over me and shaking me, and I sat up with a jerk and yelled at the pain in my shoulder. Once again I'd forgotten everything; I'd been dreaming something pretty good—something about a bathing-beach with a blazing sun and a delightful girl, who of course was Petter.

Saunders sat on the other side of the stove with his hands crossed over his hunched knees smoking a cigarette, cool and lovable as always.

The cook said:

"The lads'll be knocking off in half an hour, and I've been trying to get things straight while you've been asleep. Y'see, there's a bastard or two in the gang whom we suspect of being pretty half-and-half, and it's a bit too risky to let them in on this. But it's clear that the only way you can get out of the factory is to go with the crowd when the lads pass the control."

"But isn't the control frightfully strict?" I said.

"Not for us," he said. "This gang works over in Shed C with ordinary harmless saltpetre, just as it always has. But we go past the guard one by one, and he looks at the passes and identity cards and counts the lads, so he can be sure no outsider gets in in the mornings and no one is left here overnight. But we don't have to strip, like the lads in Shed G. And after all the control can't be so frightfully strict when there are two hundred chaps standing in a line wanting to get home quick. So you should run a chance of getting past."

"Hm," I said. "But we've neither pass nor identity card."

He nodded, and grinned craftily.

"No," he said. "But them that hasn't got must get. You might take mine, for example."

I looked at the man, and it was plain he meant it, and that he'd worked out pretty exactly our plan of campaign.

"Well, in the first place," I said, "no one could ever go mistaking us for twins, and I suppose there's a photo on your card."

"You bet," he said. "But photos are queer things, and those cards wouldn't exactly win a beauty competition after the lads have been handling them for a month or so."

He took out his card, and it certainly revealed a bit about the owner's career over the stove. It was frayed and crumpled and so smeared with soot and sauce that one could hardly spell out that his name was Hans Karlsen and that he originally hailed from Mjøndalen. But all the same the photo still showed a broad face with a brown moustache

He grinned and dipped his thumb into one of the pots ; then he smeared it carefully over the top of the stove and planted a magnificent print in the middle of the photograph. Mr. Karlsen with the moustache disappeared almost completely, and an amorphous mass remained. It was still a photo, and one couldn't deny it was a face, but it was quite impossible to see what kind of a face.

"Splendid," I said. "But what about you? You won't get out without a card."

He laughed, rubbed his hands together, and looked extremely knowing.

"I'm not going out, either," he said. "I'm spending the night here, and I'll be tied up and have a gag and may be a black eye, so that no one could ever think I'd had anything to do with all this."

I thought: Is there anything to sabotage when one meets people like this? And I seized his hand and pressed it warmly, and said :

"You're a stout fellow."

"Oh, forget it," he said. "Why, it's fun."

"What about Saunders?" I said.

"Oh, I've thought about him, too," said the cook. "Now the thing is that when the lads knock off I have a cup of warm soup ready for them, which they drink in the mess-room. When they're ready, each man takes his cup, goes out through the kitchen here, and puts the cup down there on the dresser. And then one man stays behind each evening to help me put the lights out, and tidy up a bit, and lock the place."

I saw what he was getting at, and it didn't sound *quite* impossible. At any rate, it was plain we had to take the chance.

He opened the long kitchen dresser and took out a colossal soup-pot, which he put in the corner. There was quite a lot of room inside.

"You can lie here till the lads have gone," he said. "When I kick at the door it'll mean you're to get going."

I went over to the window and lifted a corner of the sack. It was pitch dark outside and a wind was getting up. The

snow was whirling down in the lane, and I thought that a cold and stormy night was threatening, and whatever happened I was glad I hadn't got to lie outside under the barracks.

"It's nearly seven," said the cook. "You'd better crawl in now."

It was cramped, of course, and it smelt like hell of all the old half-clean pots and pans. And naturally we had to lie as quiet as mice not to knock over any of the effects and set up an outsize alarm. But the excitement did us good. I lay with my gun ready in my hand, listening to what was going on.

The workmen came clumping in, and there was a terrific tramp of heavy boots round the kitchen dresser. Then they obviously disappeared into the mess-room, for it was quite quiet for a little, and I only heard the muffled sound of many voices through closed doors.

It didn't take them more than five minutes to get outside that soup, and then the whole procession came clumping back again, and cup after cup banged down on the dresser over our heads. Then they tramped out through the door, and everything was quite quiet for a moment; then the cook kicked at the cupboard door. I opened it carefully, crawled out, stretched myself and said:

"Hands up, and not a sound!"

The cook was standing with the soup-pot in his hands, and he dropped it on to the floor so that the soup splashed up on our legs. He looked so mortally scared that I almost thought he was overdoing it a bit. Over by the stove stood a strapping young fellow. He had turned when he heard my voice, and looked surprised but not frightened. He slowly raised his hands, and took a couple of steps towards me.

"Stand still," I said.

"What in the hell does this mean?" he said slowly.

"Shut your trap!" I said.

Saunders had got up out of the cupboard, and was standing beside me. It wasn't till now that I saw he was still faithfully lugging the heavy Tommy-gun around; I wondered where he'd had it, and guessed his trouser-leg.

"Knock him down," I said, pointing to the young workman with my gun.

Saunders nodded and went up to the man. He hit out quickly and exactly with his left hand, and the man staggered backwards against the wall and sat down on the floor.

Saunders put the gun away and started to tie him up with his belt.

"Well, well," said the cook. "It's a pity, for he's a decent little bloke, but he'll be proud of his swollen lip to-morrow."

He produced a strap and some rags, which he handed to me.

"Now me, then," he said. "You needn't hit all that hard, for I bruise dam' easy."

Now I know you'll think it was a small matter and nothing to hang back for, but just you try it, and you'll see.

I raised my arm, but let it fall again. It isn't so funny to biff a chap in the eye when he's done his best to save your life.

I said :

"I can't do it."

"Bilge," said the cook. "You must think of me a bit, too, dam' it."

I said :

"Have you any special objection to Saunders' . . .?"

"Not at all," he said. "So long as it gets done."

"Saunders!" I said.

"Yes, sir," he answered.

XXXX

"FROM NOW ON you're deaf and dumb," I said.

"O.K., sir."

We saw the queue of workmen in front of us in the darkness. The men were all talking as hard as they could go, and it was clear they were impatient. They stood there stamping in the snow ; some of them beat their arms across their chests to keep warm, and all of them stared eagerly towards the clocking-out apparatus, to see if their turn wasn't coming soon.

It had become infernally cold, and the wind blew right through one. The sharp snow from the fell beat in our faces; and it was difficult to keep one's eyes open if one was facing the wind. I thought that Saunders must be just about frozen to death in his thin overall. I had my ski-ing costume under mine, but even so I could hardly stand still. The wind came in gusts down from the high fell through the narrow pass, and here on the plain it seemed to hurl itself gleefully at the great dark factories standing in its way.

I knew the storm up here, and knew how incredibly quickly it could get up ; knew this was going to continue all night, that the plateau was just one roaring blizzard by now, and

that no one could keep upright there. And I knew we'd freeze to death if we were forced to spend the night in the open.

Just at the moment the weather suited us pretty well. The chaps in the queue in front of us stood bent over, hiding their faces in their mittens, and it was obvious that the German at the clocking-out machine was keen to get the business over, for the crowd diminished rapidly.

I nudged Saunders on the elbow, and he looked up and nodded. We'd got to the guard.

He was standing with his gun over his shoulder, and a huge woollen scarf round his head under his helmet. On his legs he had colossal felt boots that went high up his thighs, and he seemed larger than life in his overcoat.

"Schneller, schneller!" (Quicker, quicker!) he shouted.

He threw no more than a glance at the cards of the two in front of us, and they stumbled out through the gate, and disappeared in the darkness.

We went through, and he said:

"Na endlich! 188. Stimmt!" (Well, at last! 188. That tallies.)

He hadn't looked at our cards at all, but he snatched the passes as we went by, and threw them into a cardboard box at his feet.

I stumbled out and took hold of Saunders' arm so as not to fall. We were out. We were free. And now I felt afresh the violent pain in my shoulder. Up to now I had completely forgotten it in the excitement. The wind bid fair to throw me over, and when I opened my mouth it was filled with air, so I had to turn round quickly and gasp so as to be able to breathe again. Saunders pulled me with him over the open field and on to the forest path, where the workers were now shambling home in small groups. He drew me in between the trees, where he stopped and put his mouth right close to my ear.

"An aeroplane was to try and land on the plateau to-night to take me up, sir," he shouted.

I got close up to *his* ear, and screamed back:

"It's quite hopeless. We must get down through the valley."

He nodded. It was clear he'd realized that himself.

I pulled my ski-ing cap well down over my ears, and began walking. I wasn't particularly at home in this tract, and it was difficult to find one's bearings in the dark, but I knew we must follow the wind and keep straight down all the time.

I was as cold as a fish, and realized Saunders must be having a hell of a time. All he had on his head was a sport's cap we'd found in the barracks, and every now and then he had to stop and rub his ears and nose with snow.

We didn't bother to look for paths. We ran downwards with long jumps between the trees, and every minute we sank to the hips in the deep snow. Each time I fell on my left side and felt the pain in my shoulder, I swore noiselessly in all the languages I could remember, and when that didn't help any longer I began to whimper, furious and uninhibited like a baby. The tears ran down over my face and froze to ice, and all I wanted to do was to throw myself down and die.

I was breathing shortly and could taste blood in my mouth. I knew we would find a little shelf lower down the valley, under the fell, and I realized that if we didn't get down there within half an hour now, we'd freeze to death however hard we toiled and moiled.

Saunders ran past me, and I could see he was nearly crazed with weariness and cold. He ran blindly and no longer saved himself when he fell, but he got up again each time and reeled on.

I put forth all my strength and caught him up again down on the slope, where he was painfully crawling up out of a hole.

"Have a care, man," I said. "It won't help to lose your head."

He turned his face to me, and I saw his nose was gleaming white.

"It's no good, sir," he said. "I'm so bloody cold."

"It's *got* to be some good," I said. "There's not much farther to go now."

I took off my mitten and rubbed his nose violently with it. It felt quite stiff and dead, and I wondered if it was any use. But gradually the skin began to get a little colour back, and I patted him on the shoulder.

"On again, Willie," I said. "You're going back to old England, whether you want to or not."

He grinned, and I thought there was undoubtedly some strength left in him, and that he wouldn't give up at the first lap. He got to his feet and we ran on.

Finally, I lost all feeling. My legs went mechanically, and when I fell it simply didn't hurt any longer. I got up again somehow or other, and just ran on. Time was an incompletely unknown concept to me, and I've no idea how long this nightmare lasted.

But suddenly the wind seemed to drop. It was still cold, but not so cold. I realized we got down from the fell and were in its lee, and that perhaps we had a chance.

Saunders stopped when I stopped, and clung tight to a tree. His senses seemed to have left him, and he resembled a broken-down old man, all the more because the rime lay white on his eyebrows and hair and the short, twenty-four-hour stubble.

"We're over the worst," I said. "But we're done for if we can't get under cover."

"I think my feet have been frost-bitten, sir," he said, "But I can probably manage a bit longer."

"You must manage," I said.

We started running again—though that's a lie, for it couldn't be called running any more. We stumbled and tottered and staggered and rolled downwards between the trees. It was steep here and there wasn't much snow on the slope, so we didn't sink in so often. To make up for this we were thrown like balls from tree to tree in our wild career and I hit myself over and over again on my bad shoulder.

Suddenly I toppled out on to a piece of flat ground, right in front of me reared a black wall. I thought for a moment it was a house, but the next moment I knew where I was. We'd got to the big timber screens built along the railway line to stop the snow from blowing over and burying the rails. We were down in the valley, and this was where the trains from the high fells and the factory community went past.

I crawled between the logs of the screen and threw myself down behind it. It felt really tepid here, and uncannily silent. My heart pounded inside me, and I felt that my wound had opened and was bleeding again. I was as weak as a child, and sobbed with weariness and pain.

Saunders came staggering after me and fell down beside me. Neither of us had the strength to say anything for a bit. I heard him panting like a bellows, and each time he breathed out he groaned as though something had gone to pieces inside him.

I don't know how long we lay there like that, but my head cleared a little at last, and I was able to breathe more or less normally. I rose to my knees and looked round.

Of course I knew this line! Petter and I had taken it many times up to Glitterheim, and I knew that Odderasen Station should lie right under the fell here, not much more than half a mile to the south on the other side of the railway-line.

Saunders didn't move, and I was afraid he'd gone to sleep on me. I threw myself at him, shaking him violently, and he opened his eyes with a completely bewildered air, and said :

"Number Three Platoon, Captain. Thirty-four men. Six killed, four wounded. Number correct."

"Get up," I said. "It's not far now."

He recognized me and heaved himself on to his feet, and I had to admire his sticking-power. After all, *I* knew the fell and had gone through storms like this ever since I was a boy. And besides, I had about three times as much on as he had.

He even managed to produce a grin, although his teeth were chattering in his head, and when we started to walk along the railway-line he kept up with me, though he staggered a bit and was plainly not quite clear where he was.

I have the impression we dragged ourselves along those lines for many hours, but it can't have been much more than thirty minutes. And at last I saw the station building, and I hurried down into the ditch beside the line and turned off to the right, where I knew there were houses.

I'm not quite clear what I actually had in mind ; I had only a wild instinctive longing to get into a house and find a stove to warm myself by, no matter what happened afterwards.

We crept carefully along between the houses lying in a clump round the station, past the general shop and the dairy and the little "Rooms" for commercial travellers. The place was blacked-out, of course, and the weather wasn't the sort to tempt people out. I walked along wondering what we were going to do, and several times I was on the point of tottering straight up to a door and banging on it, but thought better of it at the last moment.

Saunders often stumbled and many times he fell, and I thought it would be a bit hard if any one came out and caught sight of us now. We didn't give a normal impression, and would undoubtedly arouse painful interest.

I think it was a kind of Providence that made me see the old, almost illegible plate on the white house. The paint had peeled off and it was hanging crooked and half hidden behind the garden gate-post. But I went right up and spelt it out with some difficulty. It ran :

G. CASPERSEN

Medical Officer of Health.

The next minute Saunders and I were reeling through the snow in the garden up to the steps. Neither of us had any strength left. Saunders stumbled on the lowest step and fell, and didn't get up, and I half crawled up to the door, knelt in the porch, and hammered with my fist.

An eternity passed, I thought. Then the door opened, and a sharp white light streamed out, nearly blinding me. I shut my eyes and tried to get up. And then a voice said : "Wait a little. I'll help you."

It was an old, tired voice, and there wasn't a trace of fear or surprise in it, only a sublime, sovereign calm that did me an infinite amount of good. I tried to open my eyes, but I'd been out so long in the dark and the snow that they began to run at once, so I couldn't see him. But I don't think I shall ever forget his voice. In some way or other it made me feel I had come home.

X X I V

SAUNDERS was lying on his back on the sofa with open eyes, and the old doctor was bending over him massaging his naked feet. The boy writhed with pain, but not a sound escaped his tightly compressed lips.

I myself was sitting in the chair in front of the fire, and an old lady was kneeling on the floor in front of me, pulling off my frozen stiff boots. The cold that had numbed all my nerves during the last few hours was just beginning to loosen its hold, and I felt as though all the imaginable and unimaginable suffering of the world had collected together in my weary limbs. My toes ached with cold and my shoulder felt like an open wound full of salt and pepper. But all the same I was filled with an incredible happiness. Just to sit still and feel the warmth and light in a home was like an unspeakable gift ; I shall always remember that little room out in the country, and if I shut my eyes I can see it all in front of me, and again get the smell of tobacco, of old leather chairs, and of wood burning in the stove.

The doctor straightened his back and turned towards me.

"He'll pull through more or less," he said. "But the left foot is badly frost-bitten. And I'm afraid it'll give him trouble for the rest of his life. And his nose may not be so pretty to look at henceforth."

He was an old man. At least seventy, I should think, and marked by life. His face was furrowed and careworn, and I imagined he'd seen many people die and that it had

hurt him that he couldn't help them. His hair was white and rather thin on top, and his moustache was fringed yellow with tobacco. He had large, kind brown eyes, and hundreds of horizontal wrinkles ran across his forehead. He said :

"He's a plucky boy and bears it without a murmur. But he doesn't answer when I speak to him."

He said it with a twinkle in his eye, and I realized he understood quite a bit.

"He's deaf and dumb, poor chap," I said.

"I think I could cure him of that," said the doctor, laughing.

I smiled back. I was too tired to think, and I hadn't the energy to consider if I dared trust him and speak out. I said :

"We're workmen who got lost on the fells, doctor."

He bent over Saunders again and felt his legs. Then he took a rug, laid it over the boy and tucked it round him like a good old mother, and then he said softly and kindly, in English :

"Go to sleep, my boy."

The old lady looked up at me and smiled. It was as if she meant to say : Look how artful he is, my old man. It's no use trying to fool him.

Her face was wrinkled as a dry apple, brown and weathered by the fell winds, but her eyes twinkled clear and grey, and when she touched my poor feet her hands were like the hands of a young woman.

The doctor came up to me again, and stood there drying his hands.

"So you're workmen," he said quietly and pleasantly.

"Aye, and God bless the work you've done."

We looked at one another for a long time ; his eyes were steady and calm, and knew everything. I said :

"It's no use trying to act, doctor. I understand that now. But I didn't want you to know too much for your own sake."

He laughed again, and he laughed as human beings should laugh. A calm, gentle sound which was more than an answer. He pulled down my overall, cut through my sweater, looked at my shoulder, and said :

"This isn't very dangerous, but it may become so. A knife?"

"A bayonet."

"You ought really to go to hospital," he said. "But I know that's impossible, of course."

He took out what was needed, and sat down on a chair beside me. The old hands travelled lightly over my shoulder, and I forgot the pain and looked at him.

A worn-out old man in a seedy smoking-jacket whose colours weren't easy to distinguish any longer. But a man who wished his fellows nothing but good. He spoke in a low voice and as if to the air while he worked.

"They've been here, too. They've been everywhere. They've searched every house up through the valley, and they're examining all trains. They're extremely annoyed, and I think you've had luck with everything."

He poured a whole lot of iodine on to me, and I groaned and said :

"That's fine."

"Yes," he said. "It was exciting to-day, I can tell you. General Falkenhorst was up here, and a man from the Gestapo called Dr. Hahn."

"Aha," I said. "I know him."

"It sounded as though he'd demanded a number of people from the district should be shot," said the doctor, cutting bandages. "As a kind of reprisal, you see. But Falkenhorst apparently protested, because it's an act of war carried out by the English, and not ordinary sabotage."

I sat up in my chair and said : "It would be hellish if they began shooting people for that."

"I don't think they will," he said. "They found a dead Englishman outside the factory. A parachutist."

I shrank back in the chair again, shut my eyes and thought the thing over. Lucky it had been Graham who fell out there. But would Hahn give in so easily? It was clear he knew everything now about the two guests who'd so suddenly disappeared from Glitterheim, and it was natural enough to think he'd connect them up with the coup at Grafossen. I shuddered and said :

"That would be damnable!"

The doctor was ready with the bandage now. He straightened himself in his chair, took my hand and felt my pulse. He said :

"Don't think about it. If they do it, then they do it. In a time like this everybody must take his share of the risk."

The risk, yes. It suddenly dawned on me that this old man was exposing himself to endless misfortunes by having me in the house and helping me. I said :

"We'd better be getting along now."

"Why?"

"It's far too dangerous for you to have us here."

He got up and went and fetched his pipe. He knocked it out in the ash-tray and blew down it, and then he said :

"Don't say that. You'll offend me. Besides, you can't walk any farther to-night."

I didn't answer. He came up to me, laid his hand on my sound shoulder and said :

"Emma and I are proud of having you here. Everything we have is yours. We're too old to be afraid. Isn't that so, Emma?"

She looked at him and smiled.

"Yes, George. And I think you ought to give him some brandy."

He fairly ran off to the cupboard in the corner and came back with a bottle; his eyes were shining with pleasure that he'd got any.

"Do you like brandy?"

"Always," I said. "And more than ever now."

He poured out a full beer-glass for me and stood reveling in my enjoyment of it. I lit a cigarette and said :

"It's simple enough to fight against them as long as there are people who think as you do."

He'd got his pipe going and took several hard puffs before he answered :

"There are many who think like that. Nearly every one, in fact. I haven't always been so proud about being a Norwegian before, but I am now. The people are growing up. We've all become friends, faithful friends who can risk our lives for one another if necessary."

I looked at him; there was something imposing about him. An insignificant-looking little man, but his eyes shone with strength and courage, and there was something fearless and proud in his bearing.

"The worse things are, the stronger we get," he said. "Because we've learnt what it means to lose one's country. It's that which makes *you* into a hero and an old buffer like *me* forget to be frightened."

I said :

"I'm no hero, doctor, and I got into this mainly because I was drunk one night, and because I fell in love with a girl. And I should never be able to offer my life for someone else."

He smiled and took a puff at his pipe; then he began to pad to and fro over the floor. He said nothing.

"Doctor," I said. "Last night a friend of mine lost his

life. He died of his own free will, doctor. So that someone else could have a chance."

He stopped, looked at me and said:

"Well?"

"I let him do it," I said. "That's all."

The doctor walked about a bit again; then he came up to me, looked earnestly at me, and said:

"Well?"

"I let him do it. Don't you see? I didn't think for a moment that I ought to have done it. And I know that I *couldn't* have done it."

He put his hand on my shoulder and said:

"Not yesterday. Perhaps not to-day, either. But maybe to-morrow you can. We are growing up."

There was something in his voice that did me good. I supposed he'd been through a lot and learnt a great deal.

"Do you play chess?" he said.

"Yes," I said.

"Well, this struggle is like a huge game of chess. We—you and I and all this fighting people—are pawns on the board. We aren't anything by ourselves, but if we keep together we can force the dictator to move."

He paced about a bit again, and went on:

"And if he moves over our dead bodies—well, we must remember that that's what the pawns on the board are there for. Perhaps your friend felt it that way."

I thought of Otto. Yes, perhaps he'd felt it that way. Perhaps he'd always known it would end like that. And perhaps he was glad of it, too. Perhaps he was tired of being a pawn on the board. He'd lost so much in life. I nodded.

The doctor paced and paced. The old lady sat in her chair by the stove, knitting and saying nothing, and I shut my eyes and heard only the ticking of the Dutch clock and Saunders' deep breathing, and the doctor's slippers pacing and pacing. I was wonderfully comfortable, and felt only a deep peacefulness. And it didn't hurt so much to think about Otto any longer.

The steps ceased, and the doctor gave a satisfied chuckle. I opened my eyes and looked at him; he looked extremely roguish.

"Well, doctor?" I said. "What's tickling you?"

"I was thinking about how we should get you away," he said. "And now I think I've hit on something pretty artful."

"Now, to-night?"

"Early to-morrow morning. You'll be safe here to-night. I hardly think any one'll come before early to-morrow."

"Do you think they'll be coming back?"

He bit thoughtfully on the stem of his pipe, and his face wasn't so merry any longer. Then he said:

"Yes, I think they'll be coming back."

The old lady had let her knitting drop. she was looking calmly and trustfully at him, and I thought:

Those two love each other as much as the first time they met. There was an infinite tenderness in her look, but also a deep sorrow that I didn't understand.

He began to pace again, speaking fluently and quickly:

"It's impossible for you to go on foot. In the first place, you'd get nowhere with your wound and your friend's frost-bitten feet. In the second place you'd be captured before you'd gone more than a few miles. So you must take the train. But it will be searched. Every carriage is searched."

"That doesn't sound so rosy," I said.

"No," he said, "it doesn't. But then I remembered Martinsen."

The old lady suddenly began to laugh and said:

"George, you're marvellous."

"Yes, aren't I?" he said. "Don't you think it would be a job for Martinsen?"

"He'll think it's a great joke," she said.

"He is here, isn't he?"

"Yes, indeed. He came up with the evening train and will drive down again to-morrow morning."

"Emma," said the doctor. "Do you think you could run across and fetch him? He'll be asleep, of course, but if any one can wake him up, it's you."

She got up at once, and I was surprised to see how slim and spry she was. She went up to him, pulled his hair, and kissed him lightly on the forehead.

"You wily old rascal!" she said.

Then she went out to get her things on.

I said:

"What a wonderful wife you've got, doctor."

"Yes," he said. "She is wonderful."

"Have you any children?"

"We had a son."

He said it quite simply and there was no sorrow in his voice, but I realized all the same that I'd touched on a sore point, and I asked no more. She came in again, walked through the room, and went on. She had on a big sheepskin coat and

strong boots, and she waved jauntily to her husband as she disappeared.

"He's dead," said the doctor.

"Oh," I said.

"He was killed in April, 1940. At Gjøvik."

I didn't answer. Couldn't find anything to say. He went over and sat down in the chair by the stove, and he looked tired and old.

"He was an ensign," he said.

I said :

"Then you've something to be revenged for."

He didn't seem to have heard me. He put down his pipe, leaned his head on his hand and looked into the fire.

Then he said :

"I don't know why I'm telling you this."

I didn't answer, and there was a short pause.

"Perhaps it's because I've kept it to myself so long," he said.

There was silence in the room, and I felt he was sitting there suffering. I couldn't do anything.

"I've nothing to be revenged for," he said. "I have something to atone for. He was shot by his own soldiers. He wanted to surrender. He was one of those who thought the Germans were good people, and he didn't want to fight against them."

There was a silence again. He looked into the fire ; the glow from the flames fell on to the fine old worn face, and it was full of bitter pain.

Then he seemed to shake something off ; he got up hastily and laid his hand on my shoulder.

"You won't talk about it ? " he said.

"Never," I said.

"She doesn't know," he said. "It's the only secret I've had from her in all my life."

He turned away abruptly, and began to pace again.

"Have another brandy," he said. His voice was strangely low, and it sounded as though it would break.

X X V

I DON'T think I've ever seen such a large man. In olden times he would obviously have been a Viking, and spread death and terror far and wide, but I can imagine that if he chopped off people's heads it would be merely to let off steam, for it was difficult to conceive of there being any evil in him.

He seemed to fill the little room, and the doctor and his wife dwindled almost to dwarfs beside him. He was wearing a short leather jacket which fitted like a sausage-skin over his enormous shoulders, and on his legs he had a pair of felt boots which made me think of the story of the giant with the seven-league dittoes. He was holding his leather cap in his hand, and his hair was almost white; but he was young—anyway, not more than forty. His eyes were big and blue, and they seemed as though they were always smiling. His whole face was one big smile, for that matter, when he stretched out his hand and said:

"Martinsen's the name."

I said:

"Lord, you must be pretty strong."

He gave a satisfied chuckle and winked at me.

"I hear you two want to take a ride with me."

The doctor said:

"Sit down, Martinsen. It was actually I who thought that you might be able to help us a bit."

Martinsen sat down tentatively on a chair, and tried it before he let the whole of his weight rest on it. Then he nodded:

"Yes, it'll bear."

"It was a shame we had to wake you," said the doctor.

The huge man laughed again, a confident, ringing laugh.

"Surely no one can grumble at having a visit in the middle of the night from such a charming lady. And of course I'll help you. We're off at seven, and there's nothing more need be said."

"It may be dangerous, you know," said the doctor.

"Oh, blast that," said Martinsen. "It'll be a lark, any way."

"I don't quite get all this," I said. "What are we to be off in?"

"Martinsen's an engine-driver," said the doctor. "He'll take you on the engine."

The huge man looked knowingly at me, and wagged his head.

"Then you can learn to shovel coal," he said.

"He won't be much good at shovelling," said the doctor.

"But no doubt the boy there can help a bit."

Martinsen looked at the sleeping Saunders and laughed again.

"Oh, to hell with that," he said. "We'll manage." Then he turned to me.

"It's like this, y'see: The trains that go over the fells

are drawn by very powerful fell engines here to Odderasen. But from here and on down to Oslo it's not necessary to have such powerful engines—they use a power of coal. So they uncouple the fell engine here, and I take over and drive the train down to Oslo. Got it.

I nodded.

"I always have a stoker with me, but to-morrow I thought he might be ill, and so I'll take you two with me instead."

"But don't they inspect the engine, then?" I asked.

It seemed that I'd said something howlingly funny. He slapped his knee and guffawed.

"A German on my engine!" he said. "That's a good 'un!"

I came slowly to the surface through many layers of sleep, and opened my eyes. The old lady was standing over me; she held me by the shoulder and smiled.

"Have you slept well?"

"Like a log," I said. "It was wonderful."

"It's six o'clock. Martinsen is here. I'll bring you some coffee."

I sat up in bed, and felt thoroughly ashamed. Saunders and I were lying in the old couple's double-bed, and I wondered where they'd slept, if, indeed, they'd slept at all. I couldn't remember how I'd got there—must just have gone out like a candle and then they'd carried me in. I hoped Martinsen had helped with that part.

She came in again with coffee and sandwiches, with Martinsen looming behind her. He grinned from ear to ear, waved his hand, and said:

"So you've come to life again, chum?"

He had two incredibly dirty stoker's suits under his arm, and two of those peaked caps that railwaymen wear, with the Norwegian State Railway badge in front. They were quite black with soot, and looked very convincing.

I shook Saunders, and he opened his eyes and sat up in bed. He looked so completely bewildered that Martinsen began to laugh. I said:

"Coffee."

Saunders gave a faint smile, and put his hand to his forehead.

"I was dreaming I was home in Kent," he said. "Thanks, sir."

He drank his coffee and ate a sandwich. He chewed mechanically, and there was a strangely remote expression on his face, as though his thoughts were very far away.

"Kent's a beautiful place," I said.

"Yes, sir," he said. "It'll be spring there just now. No snow."

"And no doubt you've got a little girl waiting for you there," I said.

He blushed and smiled.

"Yes, sir."

Martinsen sat down on the side of the bed and said :

"It'll go like a house on fire. It's still dark outside, and we'll walk straight into the engine-shed and sit in the old bus. Of course it's not absolutely necessary for you to stick your nose out before we get to the station, mister, and it'll be as well if your friend doesn't talk English."

"You began so well saying 'chum' when you came in," I said. "Why not go on that way?"

"Suits me," he said. "It feels a bit more natural, somehow."

"My name's Iben."

"Oh well," he said. "I've heard worse. Mine's Gustav. How about getting your glad-rags on?"

I crawled out of bed and started to get dressed. My shoulder was still painful, but not nearly as bad as yesterday, and I felt thoroughly rested and ready to take up the struggle again.

Saunders looked a lot better, too, and when he'd got on his stoker's rig-out he looked pretty convincing; but a sharp eye could doubtless have discovered he was an Englishman.

Suddenly Martinsen stiffened and went to the window. I heard a car driving up. He lifted the curtain a little and looked out, but hastily dropped it again and turned to me.

"The devil!" he said. "Here they are."

The car stopped.

I looked round helplessly. We were trapped. There was no possibility of getting out without going right past the car. And in a second they'd be coming in and find us.

Saunders had plainly grasped the situation. He was quite calm, and he took his gun out of his trouser-leg and released the safety-catch. I took my gun out too, and sat down on the bed.

The door opened and the doctor came in. He looked old and tired, and I imagined he hadn't been to bed. But he was quite composed.

"Keep quiet," he said. "It's only me they've come for."

Then he went out again and shut the door.

I kneeled at the keyhole and looked into the next room.

I heard the door bell ring, and saw the doctor go out into the hall to unlock the door. Immediately afterwards he came in again, and behind him came a German N.C.O. in S.S. uniform. The doctor stood with his back to me and blocked the keyhole, so I couldn't see any more, but I heard their voices. The German spoke Norwegian with a strong accent.

"You are Doctor George Caspersen?"

"Yes."

"Medical Officer of health?"

"Formerly. I've retired."

"You are to come with me."

"Why?"

"I do not know. I have received orders to take you to Oslo."

The doctor said:

"May I pack a bag?"

His voice was quite calm, but very tired.

"That is unnecessary."

I shuddered. Those three brutal words said everything.

The doctor understood too. He said:

"May I say good-bye to my wife?"

"Yes. You can have three minutes."

He moved, and I could see the German now. A big broad fellow, with thick lips and a little black moustache, and eye-glasses with gold rims. He had a revolver, but it was in the holster, and I thought it would be an easy matter to bump him off before he had time to wink. But what would be the use?

I heard the doctor's voice again:

"Emma. I've got to go to Oslo."

No tears. No scenes. Her voice was steady and calm, but infinitely sorrowful.

"Yes, George, I understand."

"You mustn't be grieved. I'll be coming back."

"Yes."

"To-morrow, I should think."

"Yes, to-morrow."

"My own dear one. It's strange to be going away from you."

"Can't I come with you?"

"No, Emma."

The N.C.O. said:

"Hurry up, doctor. We're taking the seven o'clock train."

"Very well," said the doctor.

The old lady said:

"I'll get your coat."

There was a silence. I saw only the German. He stood there stiff as a ramrod, and he seemed to be feeling bored. Now and then he looked at his wrist-watch.

Then I caught a glimpse of the doctor. He'd got his coat on and was standing with his fur cap in his hand. There was something remarkably sad and forlorn about his face. He said:

"We'll be meeting again soon, Emma."

"Yes, George, soon."

I got up and looked at the other two. Martinsen had gone very pale, and was standing there biting his lip. We heard the door bang outside. Immediately afterwards we heard the car drive away.

Martinsen said:

"We must get a move on."

I went into the room. The old lady was sitting on the chair by the door. She was looking straight in front of her, and her face was filled with an endless sorrow. But she wasn't weeping. I swallowed, and could hardly get a word out.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Caspersen. And thanks for everything. . . ."

She looked up with a smile and gave me her hand.

"Good-bye," she said. "And God speed."

The great engine snorted heavily and slowly, and Martinsen stood with his pipe in his mouth listening to its breathing. His enormous hands flew swiftly and skilfully from lever to lever, and the engine blew out steam in two or three long blasts and a series of short hectic ones; the machinery quivered with latent power, the pistons slowly began moving up and down. Then we rolled out of the shed into the station. Saunders was sitting on the floor between Martinsen's feet, and I stood squeezed into the corner, peering out of the window.

We drove into the siding and slowly approached the long line of coaches standing there waiting for us. Our speed slackened, we crawled backwards over the rails, there was a slight bump, and I heard the linesmen coupling up.

Martinsen waved the steam away, pushed me on to one side, and leaned out of the window, wiping his hands on a bundle of cotton waste. He said:

"Mind yourselves, you two. There are several junctions

for Grafossen, and at every station the trains will be inspected. There they are. Look."

I looked cautiously, and saw a little herd of men coming out of a carriage about the middle of the train. First the station-master, then a little fat fellow in the uniform of the Norwegian State Police, and behind them two German military police with guns on straps over their shoulders.

"They're very thorough about it," said Martinsen.

I thought it took an eternity. They entered carriage after carriage, and were inside a long time. It was like an inexorable fate slowly making its way towards us. I grew nervous and said :

"I think we ought to start now."

Martinsen laughed.

The little troop came out of the front carriage, and my blood ran cold when I saw them coming on towards us. Martinsen raised his hand and waved to them.

"Watcher, mates!" he said. "Don't forget me. You know I've got the whole tender full of Englishmen!"

My heart stopped beating, but if my life had been at stake ten times over I couldn't have helped craning my neck and looking out under Martinsen's shoulder.

The station-master laughed, and the Norwegian policeman shook his head and said :

"It's nothing to joke about, Gustav."

"Oh, come off it, Olsen," said Martinsen. "Love to your old girl, by the way. How many is it you've got now?"

"Seven," said the policeman.

"Christ!" said Martinsen. "She's nothing but a bloody incubator!"

The station-master took a couple of steps backwards, and looked along the train. Then he raised his flag and blew his whistle. Martinsen opened the valve and said :

"Off we go, then."

We were moving. The long train started slowly gliding forward, the din and the speed increased, the wind tore off my cap, and it was glorious to feel the cool of the morning on my cheeks.

Martinsen turned to me with a laugh.

"It's always best to tell the truth," he said. "They're not such fools as to believe *that*!"

We plunged into a tunnel and the din became a fantastic crescendo. We came out again on the other side; the sun was just rising, and we got it full in the face. It was going to be a wonderful day. I felt full of wild triumph. We were

free. We'd got away. Then I thought of Otto again, and the doctor, and didn't feel so happy any more.

Saunders got up and began shovelling coal. He worked well, and looked as if he enjoyed doing it. The strong young muscles swelled under the stoker's suit, and I thought he was a grand chap and that it was a good thing he'd pulled through. He was far too young to die. He stopped and leant on his shovel, and then he asked :

"What do you call 'the Jerries' over here?"

I shrugged. "We just call them Germans," I said. "We haven't been able to find a worse name."

I felt tired and sat down on the floor. And the thoughts came back, and I felt mournful in some way. These were Hahn's reprisals. Revenge for Grafossen. I thought of the good old man and of his wife, and I thought that there seemed no sense in anything. Whatever sort of a war was this? Systematic injustice, always being meted out to completely innocent people.

I glanced up and noticed that Martinsen was standing there, looking at me. He shook his head and said :

"Don't think about it. It doesn't help any."

"I can't help it," I said. "I feel as if it were all my doing."

"That's just rot," he said. He turned front again and got busy with his levers.

I thought of Petter, too. Where was she now? How was she? Had she gone home? Had they arrested her?

Martinsen said :

"Come, laddie, keep your pecker up. Don't sit there and spoil all my fun."

I couldn't help laughing, and he said :

"That's better. Can you sing?"

"A bit," I said. "But there's more of the peacock than the nightingale about the result."

"I'm always singing," he said. "When I've got up steam and the old lady begins to run by herself. I like singing."

"Sing on, then," I said.

"D'you know this?"

He struck up in a splendid bass. A musical critic would no doubt have found a lot to object to in it, but I liked it. He carolled :

*"Martin's on the engine,
Don't be afraid!
Martin's on the engine,"
Said the little maid.*

*Woe is she and woe is Martin,
For before the break of day,
In his red heart's blood a-weltering
There a bloody corp he lay !*

I laughed and said :
" You look out. Who knows if you can't foretell the future ! "

PART FOUR

COLLAPSE

XXVI

IT WAS DARK once more when we at last drove in under the dirty old glass roof of the station at Oslo. It was mild, too, and there was a suspicion of spring in the air.

I stood huddled behind Martinsen at the window, while the train slowly emptied and the passengers went past us towards the exit. Suddenly he stiffened and clutched my arm.

Old Dr. Caspersen was coming along the platform together with the N.C.O. His head was bowed, and I caught a fleeting glimpse of the tired sorrowful face as he passed the engine.

Then I discovered another man on the platform, and make myself even smaller behind Martinsen when I saw who it was. He still had a mackintosh and a Tyrolean hat, and the same stony shark grin which made his face so inhuman. He was together with two other blokes in mufti and an officer who was plainly not enjoying his company overmuch. They were not speaking, and they walked past and vanished.

And then my heart seemed to miss a beat, but this time it was for joy. Petter came walking slowly down the train ; she was carrying her bag herself and walked quickly and lightly as always. I wanted to call out to her, but naturally I didn't. When she passed the engine I saw she was looking tired and sorrowful. There was something dead about her face, which hurt me to see. But at all events she was free, and that was the main thing.

The platform grew fairly empty, and Martinsen said :

" Hop out on the other side and go straight over the track there and out the back way. And thanks for your company."

I pressed his hand hard, and he gave a cheery smile.

"It was a lark," he said. "It isn't as difficult to fool them as they think it is."

Saunders and I forced ourselves to walk slowly towards the exit. I wanted to run, and every minute I expected to feel a hand on my shoulder, but nothing happened. We came out behind the station into the narrow, dark street, and Saunders said:

"What do we do now, sir?"

"Shut up," I said. "For God's sake remember you're deaf and dumb."

I was irritable and nervous and tired, and my shoulder was hurting like mad now. The pain seemed to spread, and I had the impression that the whole of my left arm had become twice the size it had been and was hanging like a useless club by my side.

We started to walk up towards Valerengen, and the farther up we got the easier I felt. It's really rather strange how safe one feels in a blacked-out town like this. One seems to be wrapped in a kind of cloak of invisibility, and people can pass one and knock into one without having the least idea what one looks like. And even if they had seen us we would hardly have excited any particular attention. Two railway-men going home from work—that's all.

I'd been up in the fells so long that I'd almost forgotten just how infested with Germans the town was. Everywhere the streets echoed to the iron tips of their boots, and I understood that it was hard for Saunders to get used to walking straight past them without shooting at them. Some of them were pretty drunk and pretty insolent, and twice we had to step off into the gutter to let them pass. They walked about as if they owned the town, and the time was over when they had orders to leave the girls alone.

It had grown late when we finally got up to Valerengen, and I was as exhausted as after a long march. I found the street quite soon, but had to look for the number of the house quite a time. And then at last we were standing in the dark stairway and stole cautiously up to the third floor. It seemed to be quite a lively house. Someone was playing the concertina on the second floor, and two old hags were involved in a pretty violent exchange of opinions interlarded with various opprobrious terms on the third.

I found the door and knocked three times, and a few moments went by. Then the door opened very slowly, and Gingernuts looked out. He had his revolver in his

hand and looked as though he were prepared for the worst. When he saw me, he laughed and said :

"Come in, but look lively about it."

He went in and he shut the door and locked it carefully. Then he whispered :

"I thought it was the police. Where's Otto?"

"Otto's dead," I said.

"Oh Christ," he said. "And who's this?"

"Englishman," I said. "Saunders."

"Oh," said Gingernuts. "Squat on the bed. Want a drink?"

"I want three," I said.

He took out a bottle from under the bed, and I said :

"Cosy little place you've got here."

Truth to tell, it was a lousy room, and not much cosier than a prison cell. An iron bed with brass knobs. A bedside table and a rickety iron washstand with a zinc basin. Two kitchen chairs and a kitchen table where Gingernuts had been having his supper off half a loaf and a bit of margarine plus a tin of sardines, all served on the last number of the evening paper.

He gave me the tooth glass, and Saunders got a cup without a handle, and we toasted one another.

It went well on the whole, didn't it?" he said.

"Depends how you look at it," I said. "Their plant went to blazes, anyway."

"Things aren't so good here," he said. "We're cooked, and all that's left to do is to vamoose, if we can. Look at that."

He moved the sardine-tin, and I saw that his picture was on the front page. It wasn't particularly flattering but it was clear, and plainly hailed from the criminal records and showed him both full-face and in profile.

"What do they want you for?" I said.

He sighed and shook his head.

You know they've begun to conscript people to that bloody Todt Labour Organisation," he said. "So I dropped in to the office the other evening and burnt up the lists for them. And then, y'see, a cove came in before I was quite ready."

"Well?" I said.

"I thought he was dead when I left," said Gingernuts.

"But he wasn't. And he's identified me in that big fairy-tale book, see?"

"And the others?"

"Olaf's been nabbed. And Erik drove down into Stry-

kenkleiva with a car-load yesterday evening and killed himself."

"In other words, we're completely split."

"Yes," said Gingernuts. "And there's no telling how long Olaf will be able to keep mum. It wouldn't surprise me to hear they weren't particularly nice to him."

"Do you know if they've occupied my flat?"

"I don't know anything. I sit here trying to think out how I'm going to get away, and every time I hear anything in the corridor I think it's the police. It isn't very pleasant."

"Cheer up," I said. "It'll be all right. At worst, it'll be all wrong."

He laughed and slapped me on the bad shoulder.

"Would you mind taking the other one another time?" I said.

"Ow," he said. "What's up with you, then?"

"Bayonet. Tell you all about it another time. Now I must go up to Petter."

"I don't think the air's particularly wholesome to be out in just now."

"I must," I said. "Can Saunders stay here?"

"Christ, yes. It's pleasant to have company. Perhaps he can shoot, too, if any one should come?"

"You bet he can," I said. "He's got a whole cannon on him."

Gingernuts looked at me and said:

"You look awful. I think Petter could do without quite a bit of that beard you've gone and got yourself."

I went up to the cracked mirror over the washstand, and he hadn't exaggerated. I saw a twisted, ill-favoured face, brown with sun and black with soot, with a couple of days' beard on the chin. A terrifying face that would make any one stop short in the street and think quite a lot of things.

I took Gingernuts' razor and got going, and ten minutes later I thought it would do. Gingernuts looked carefully out into the corridor before he let me out. I pressed his hand and said:

"To-morrow we must try and get away."

I didn't dare take the tram, and it was a long way to walk, but in a way that was just as well. There was practically no traffic now, and the silence and darkness did me good and calmed my nerves.

Things didn't look too well. We couldn't do any more. The only thing left was to get out of the country, and that

might be difficult enough. The organisation had fallen to pieces, as we'd always known it must, some time or other. Others would have to take up the work where we'd left it. New pawns on the chess-board. I remembered the doctor and wondered what they'd do to him.

It was rather queer to be walking like that in the dark and to be through with everything that had formerly made up one's life. I could never again go into The Palms and have a drink. I could never go home again, and I'd lost one and a half million crowns and all my suits and the last six bottles of brandy in the cupboard at Park Road.

Or had I? Was it possible that Hahn had not seen the connection? That they weren't looking for me at all? There was a great deal that didn't fit in properly. Petter, for example. She'd come travelling home free and unhurt.

I had walked straight through the town by this time and was going down the street where Petter lived. I kept close to the house walls and walked on tiptoe so that my steps shouldn't be heard, and I listened intently for any kind of sound. The street was completely silent, and I guessed it must be near midnight. My watch had stopped; I'd forgotten to wind it up.

This was dangerous. It would be typical of Hahn to have the house under observation and mum's the word. In that case it was all up with both me and Petter.

I remained standing at the street door quite still for five minutes, with all my senses on the alert. Not a sound. Everything seemed quite normal, and I was longing almost unbearably to see her.

I found the bell to her flat, and rang quickly three times. She'd realize it was one of us, and wouldn't be frightened. A little time passed, and then I heard the door creak, and I pushed it open and ran up the stairs.

In front of her door I stopped and waited. My heart was beating wildly with longing.

She opened the door and I forgot all the rottenness and knew nothing but joy. For I saw how the gladness came back to her eyes when she saw who it was. How those eyes grew big and blue and kindled with happiness, and how the whole of her dear face lit up.

I stepped in. I couldn't speak. Just stood there looking at her. She said:

"Iben, I love you."

An ocean closed over my head. A roaring ocean of hap-

piness and exultation that washed away everything. Then I rose slowly up through the waves of happiness and lay quite still clinging fast to the moment, and then I opened my eyes.

She put her hand on my chest and said :

"How hard your heart's beating."

"Petter," I whispered. "Are you happy?"

"I was in heaven," she said. "All the stars fell down round me. Were you there, too?"

"I was in an ocean," I said. "A great ocean that I was drowned in. I love you."

I felt that there had never been anything like this. The whole of my life up to now had only been some kind of puppet-show. I looked into her eyes and knew it was the first time I'd ever loved any one.

"Iben."

"Yes?"

"It's so strange. I feel as though I'd been through something great and wonderful, something I've never known before."

I kissed her and said :

"My dear. My own dear."

"That it could be so . . . so beautiful!"

"Yes, Petter. It can be so beautiful."

I lay still not thinking about anything, just blissfully happy. Then I heard she was crying. I said :

"My darling little girl. You're crying."

"Yes," she said. "I'm so happy. Much too happy."

I put my arm round her neck and looked into her eyes. They were big and starry with tears, and I kissed them.

"Are you quite sure you love me, Petter?"

"Yes, my dear, dear one," she said. "I'm quite sure."

XXVII

"On the night of March 18 an attempt was made to blow up the Norwegian Nitrogen Product Co.'s works at Grafossen. The resultant damage is slight, but the outrage is a new proof of the methods that our Semitico-plutocratic enemies use in their struggle to devastate Europe and bring about world rule of Communism and international Judæism. The attempt was carried out by British parachutists, who were forced to fight and were cut down to the last man.

"There are, however, indications that the British bandits had sympathisers on Norwegian soil who may have assisted them, and I have therefore made arrests among the civil population of the district by order of the Reichskommissar.

"In accordance with the sentence of the Northern Police Court of the 20th inst., three of the accused have been condemned to be shot. The guilty persons are :

"Jens Vetland, elementary school teacher, 34 years, son of Professor Anton Vetland, former engineer at Grafossen, who has escaped to England and who can be presumed to have been behind the outrage.

"Sigvald Peder Larsen, merchant, 59 years.

"Dr. George Caspersen, 72 years.

"Sentence was carried out after Herr Reichskommissar had rejected the petitions for mercy. The property of the deceased has been confiscated to the State.

"Oslo, March 20th, 1943."

The signature on the communiqué was that of the S.S. general, but it *ought* to have been : *Felix Hahn*.

I lowered the paper slowly and looked at Petter. Her eyes were full of tears. For my part I was only livid, filled with a wild bitter hate that bid fair to suffocate me. This was Hahn's revenge.

I said :

"It feels as though it were my fault."

"I know how you feel," she said. "But you mustn't think that. It had to be done, and we did it."

"I know," I said. "But it doesn't help."

I turned over the pages and saw my own photograph. I read :

"In connection with the attempt on Grafossen last night the German Security Police are searching for the Norwegian citizen Iben Holt, born 14/3/1913. He is presumed to have helped the British bandits, and a reward of 50,000 crowns is offered for information that may lead to his arrest. He is about 6 feet tall, has fair hair and blue eyes, clean-shaven, oval face, brown skin. He was last seen at Glitterheim Mountain Hotel, whence he disappeared on the night of March 18th of this year.

"Search is further being made for Norwegian citizen Otto Frank, probably about 35 years of age. There is reason to suppose that this person has been appearing under an assumed name, and his real name has not yet been established ; it has also not been possible to obtain any photograph of him.

He is thought to be about 6 feet tall, thin, with strongly marked features, pale skin, straight, fairly large nose, clean-shaven, with grey eyes and brown hair a little grey at the temples. He was also last seen at Glitterheim Mountain Hotel the night of March 18th.

"A reward of up to 50,000 crowns is offered for information leading to his apprehension or which can help to establish his identity."

I recognized the photo. They must have found it in my flat. I was glad there hadn't been anything else there they might have had a use for.

"We're beginning to get into the danger zone, Petter," I said. "And I understand this less and less."

We were sitting eating breakfast and the first spring sun was shining outside and promised a glorious day. But probably not for us.

"Now they know so much, it's quite incomprehensible why Hahn's let you go free," I said.

She nodded.

"Yes, I've thought of that myself. He must have something or other up his sleeve."

I looked at her, and she nodded again.

"Yes," she said. "Just exactly. I think he wants to try and force me to . . . to . . ."

"I understand," I said. "You needn't go on. You may very well be right. He isn't the first Gestapo man with private interests that overshadow those of the Vaterland."

"It's much too dangerous for you to stay here," she said.

"It's still more dangerous to go out."

She thought a bit, and realized I was right.

"We must get out of here to-night," I said. "No matter what we do after that. It's plain they'll find out who Otto was. And then they'll doubtless discover he was married to your sister. That's more than enough, and Hahn won't be able to keep you outside Victoria Terrace, however much he wants to keep you to himself."

She thought a while and said:

"I'm going to see Gingernuts. After all, he's got to get out too, and so must that Saunders of yours. Gingernuts is sure to hit on something."

"I don't like it," I said. "You must be very careful! They may shadow you."

"I know," she said. "But they won't find that any too easy."

It was a ghastly day. The hours dragged by, and I saw

in imagination everything that might happen to Petter. I tried to read, but it didn't help, and even smoking had lost its appeal. The pain in my shoulder got worse, and my arm looked gruesome now. It was blue and swollen, with ugly red streaks running over it here and there, and I had a violent, burning headache.

Once, about two, the door-bell rang for a long time. I lay down behind the sofa and waited, but nothing happened.

At three I went out into the little kitchen and began to get dinner. I've always thought it fun to cook, but it wasn't fun at all to-day. I thought of what had happened during the last few months, and wondered if I'd ever be the old, thoughtless, happy Iben Holt again. It wasn't likely. There was a part of my life that was over and forgotten. I had learnt a lot in these months, and seen many things that had made me older and more bitter, but stronger too.

I thought about Hahn and hated him. Three innocent people shot. People who'd had nothing to do with the whole thing. Shot to frighten us. How little they understood. Throughout the whole country this made people set their teeth and fight even more doggedly in the invisible secret war. Just this would bring forth even more pawns to the chessboard.

Petter came at four. She was tired but hopeful.

"Gingernuts is coming at nine," she said. "And I like Saunders very much. He looks as if he could get himself out of a tight corner."

"There are no flies on Saunders," I said. "Has Gingernuts any ideas?"

"No. He's going to steal a car and Saunders can drive it. We'll quite simply get in and drive as far as possible."

Well, I had heard better suggestions, but for my part I wasn't in a state to produce anything even as good as that one.

"Well, well," I said. "It'll come off somehow. The most important thing is that you love me."

She smiled and sat down on my knee, and I put my sound arm round her and kissed her. She stroked my hair and said:

"Yes, Iben, I love you. More than I can say. You've become the sort of person I wanted you to be."

"Good."

"As long as we're together I don't care what happens. I'm not afraid of anything when I'm with you."

"You aren't ever afraid, Petter," I said. "You don't know what it means to be frightened."

"If you knew how frightened I've been these last two days."

"Yes, for me."

"Yes, for you. I've always been afraid on your account. Right from the day you went on board to fetch Marion."

"But you didn't love me then."

She laughed and rumped my hair and said :

"Darling silly ass. I've always loved you."

I said :

"Now I'm going to give you your dinner."

Half-past eight had come at last. I don't know how it was ; perhaps it was the pain, or the thought of those who had already lost their lives and of the catastrophe that had overtaken our organisation—at any rate I was ready to lose courage. I've never been a brave person, and during the last few months I'd often felt how I had to take myself by the scruff of the neck to force myself to many things that in point of fact I was not at all keen on. Now it looked as if that grip had slackened.

I felt weak-kneed, and my mind misgave me that I wouldn't live to see next morning ; I thought that up to now I had, strictly speaking, been lucky. If it *really* came to it, if I really got into a mess, my nerves would go back on me, and I wouldn't be much to write home about.

Petter was calmer, but it was plain that waiting told on her, too, and that my nerves were infectious.

We'd agreed to leave everything behind and travel without luggage. If we got over at all, it would be in a terrific hurry and at the eleventh hour, and only a fool would encumber himself with anything that might hinder his progress. Petter was wearing skiing trousers and an anorack and a pair of stout boots, and I had nothing but my dirty stoker's overall, but my boots were O.K. and I had plenty on underneath. I had nine shots in my gun, and two reserve clips.

"I think we ought to have a drink," said Petter.

"Well, *one*," I said. "Not more. I'm not good for much any longer, Petter. And it won't improve matters if I go and get drunk."

She took out the bottle and two glasses ; we were just standing there and I'd opened my mouth to say *Cheerio*, when there was a ring at the door.

"There he is," I said. "Fine."

Petter put her glass down hurriedly.

"Gingernuts would have rung three times," she said.

That was true. I felt as though a clammy hand had taken me by the neck.

"What shall we do ?" I said.

Petter was tidying away the glasses and the bottle while she spoke.

"If it's them," she said, "they'll search the whole flat. Go out on to the balcony and down the fire escape."

"What about you?" I said.

"Oh, I'll manage somehow," she said. "They've got nothing definite on me."

I shook my head. There was another ring, and she said:

"If they find you here, I'm done for in any case."

That was true. I pulled out my gun and went up to the balcony door. The panes in it were blacked out, of course, with black paper fastened with drawing-pins. I poked a hole through the paper with the barrel of my gun before I slipped out and shut the door after me.

It was twilight outside, and mild and spring-like. The street under me was deserted and empty, and as far as I could see there was no guard in front of the house, but I saw the contours of a car, and it had no gas generator, so I realized it was German.

I peeped in through the hole in the paper. Petter had just come in from the hall and just behind her, with his Tyrolean hat in his hand and his mackintosh unbuttoned, came Dr. Felix Hahn.

At first I had only one thought—that he was alone. That he was standing there, three yards from me, with his shark smile, alone. I felt the same instinctive lust to kill as people do when they see an adder. And he *was* an adder as he stood there in the middle of the carpet with his sickening, polite smile, looking at Petter with his head a little on one side.

I took hold of the balcony door and pushed it slightly open. But at the last moment I thought better of it. Probably the corridor outside was full of Gestapo men. I'd only be precipitating the catastrophe.

He said:

"Pardon me, madam, for disturbing you like this."

If Petter was frightened, she didn't show it. She stood quite calmly with her hand on the back of a chair, and looked at him coldly.

"Dr. Hahn," she said, "I would prefer to speak with you at your office if there's anything you want to ask me."

He laughed, and his laugh was frightful. Not shrill nor harsh, but ominous and tiresome, and incredibly exasperating.

I understood how it irritated Petter, too.

"What should I have to ask you about, madam?" he said.

Well, that was one up to him already. She grew a little confused, and her voice was not quite steady when she answered :

"No, of course, there is nothing."

"So that my little visit is quite informal and friendly," he said. "May I sit down?"

She waited a second too long before she said :

"I'm alone, and I was going out."

He gave a short laugh, and sat down.

"Yes, I see you're well wrapped up."

"I was thinking of going out ski-ing."

This time she answered too soon.

"I wouldn't do that, madam," he said. "There's practically no snow left."

Another point to him. Of course there wasn't any more snow. One would have to go far up north to find it, anyway.

"Isn't there?" said Petter. "I didn't know that."

"Quite natural you shouldn't," he said, in an understanding voice. "After all, you didn't get back from the fells till yesterday evening."

"Of course."

"I hope you had a good time there."

That infernal voice could make a stone forget itself.

"Yes."

"Nice people?"

"Yes."

He took out his cigarette case and offered it to her. She shook her head, and he took one himself and put it with aggravating care into his long black holder. Then he said :

"I'd thought of suggesting you came out with me."

It was so insolent, and the tone was so absolutely unequivocal, that he might just as well have used the real brutal words.

She bit her lip, but her voice was as calm as ever.

"As you see, I'm not dressed to go out with any one."

He lit his cigarette, blew out the smoke, and said :

"That doesn't matter. You won't meet any one. I'm quite alone at home."

Now her voice shook, and she saw her hand clench on the back of the chair.

"Dr. Hahn. I don't know if you remember that you made the same proposal to me once before."

He nodded, and it looked as though he were enjoying himself.

"Very well," he said. "You wouldn't consider it that time, if I remember rightly."

She didn't answer, and he went on :

"I seem to remember that if nothing came of our projected affaire, it was due to certain unfortunate circumstances to do with the death of your sister."

She bit her lip again and looked down, and I understood she was very near to tears. He said :

"I must beg you to believe that they were circumstances over which I had no control. I can assure you that I would have been more than happy to have seen her live, anyway shall we say for another three weeks ? "

This was so unfeeling that I felt the blood hammering in my head, and I clenched my hand so hard round my gun that it hurt.

The detestable voice went on, slowly and expressionlessly :

"Now certain unfortunate circumstances have arisen again."

"I don't think I quite get your meaning," said Petter, and her voice was icy.

"It's very likely. But if I'm not mistaken, you have reason to mourn the loss of a very good, shall we say a very *intimate* friend ? "

There was a deathly silence for a moment, then he resumed :
"I'm referring to a young man of the name of Holt. He disappeared, as you know."

"Yes."

"Have you any idea why ? "

She was quite calm again now. We'd got down to brass tacks.

"I can very well imagine why," she said. "He'd caused a pretty thorough scandal that evening, and was very drunk. I can understand that he didn't want to show his face at the hotel any more."

He nodded and laughed again.

"Very plausible," he said. "An impulsive young man, what ? But to-day we found him."

"Indeed ? "

"Not in his entirety, it's true," he said. "He'll hardly be usable for what he was made to do, any more. We found him in small pieces. And do you know where ? "

"How in the world should I know that ? "

"No, of course not. How *should* you know that ? We found him when clearing up in the blown-up shop at Grafossen."

I remembered the last evening with Otto on the plateau. Remembered I'd lent him my belt. Remembered the initials I.H. that I'd forgotten to rip out before we started.

Hahn was speaking again :

" So there isn't really any reason why you shouldn't begin a new, shall we say intimate, affaire. And I have the honour of offering my services."

Silence again. Then Petter spoke, and now she was angry.

" Dr. Hahn. Will you kindly go ? "

He laughed, bent forward, and knocked off his ash into the ash-tray.

" I'm known as a very accommodating person," he said.

" But I'm not as accommodating as all that."

" I understand," she said. " You want to make use of the fact that I knew this Iben Holt. But there were hundreds of women who knew him. I had no idea that he was anything different or anything more than what they all knew, and I don't believe for a minute that he *was*."

" Interesting," he said. " But what's that got to do with the point at issue ? "

" The point at issue ? "

" Yes. The point at issue is quite simply this, that you are going to come home with me."

" And if I don't, you're going to have me arrested because of my acquaintance with Iben Holt."

" I'm very glad that his premature but undeniably very convenient death makes it *possible* for me to abstain from a step of that kind. But if you were to prove quite impervious to reason, there's naturally nothing to stop me taking that step."

Petter said :

" I'm a little tired. And you speak in circles. What is it actually that you want ? "

" Put very shortly and clearly, I'm giving you the choice between a board in the German prison and a considerably more comfortable couch in my home."

I jerked open the balcony door and walked in.

XXVIII

I SEEMED to see him through a red haze, and I'm afraid that what I can tell about the minutes immediately following is very confused and incomplete. I can remember that I threw away my revolver because the only thought I had was to get my fingers round his throat.

He jumped up and fumbled in the inner pocket of his jacket, but I was already on top of him and threw him back in the sofa. He got out his revolver, but I snatched it from him and hurled it away over the floor. I seem to remember that I hit out quite as well with my injured left arm as with the right one, but that may be imagination, of course.

He was weak. Physically, I was the superior, although I was wounded, and he ought to have been like a rag in my hands. But he fought like a rat when it can't find a hole any longer, and once he got away from me.

He got one hand free and hit me in the eye, and for a second I slackened my grip on his neck. He wriggled out of my arms like an eel, and rolled out of the sofa on to the floor. And he was already on his feet when I threw myself at him again.

He fell heavily to the floor and gave one single scream. He lay on his belly, and I put my knee in the small of his back and pressed my hands on his neck.

A little while afterwards he was still. I turned him on his back, and his eyes stared empty and dead up at the ceiling. I got up trembling; the red haze slowly cleared, and I found my head aching.

But neither then nor at any time since did I feel anything at the thought of what I'd done more than what one feels when one's killed an adder.

Petter had sunk into the chair by the door, with her face buried in her hands. I stood looking down at Hahn, and my hands were still crooked like claws. I breathed heavily and shortly, as if I'd been running too fast, and my mind was a blank. His shark smile was gone now; his face was distorted with the wild, craven fear he had felt the last few minutes. He was no longer impressive.

Then there were three rings at the door.

"Gingernuts," said Petter. "Now the thing is to get away."

"Petter," I said, and it was as if I'd got back my senses in a flash. "Wait a bit. I've killed Hahn."

"Yes," she said. "You've killed Hahn."

She ran out, and I remained behind, looking at him. I thought: You've killed a man. But I felt nothing, and didn't regret it.

Gingernuts came in. He stopped on the threshold and didn't say anything for a bit. Then he came in and bent over Hahn, and then he gave a low whistle.

"Good work," was all he said.

I looked at him. He'd put on a brown moustache, which made him look ridiculous, and he'd got on a whole lot of clothes that couldn't possibly be his. A hard black hat, which sat straight on top of his head, and a black coat that might have suited a sexton. But I felt no desire to laugh just then.

"Saunders is waiting downstairs," he said quickly. "We must hurry. I've pinched a car, but it's a miserable old crock. I couldn't get hold of anything better."

"Yes," I said, and didn't recognize my own voice. "Let's get going."

"What're you talking so loud for?" said Gingernuts, looking at me in surprise.

"I don't know," I said. "I don't know."

Just then there was another ring. Loud and long, but only once.

"Christ!" said Gingernuts. "What's that now?"

A wild fear surged through me. We were caught. And there lay Hahn. We were all three of us sunk.

Gingernuts said: "Go to the door, Petter. There's no use trying to get away. Come here."

We ran out into the hall and placed ourselves by the wall so that the door would hide us when it opened. Gingernuts had his revolver in his fist and whispered:

"Where's your gun?"

"In there," I said.

"Oh Gawd," he said. "But open the door now."

There was another violent peal, and Petter opened the door. Through the crack I saw a constable in Norwegian uniform. He said:

"Whatever are you thinking of, ma'am? Your balcony door's open and the place is shining like a blooming light-house."

The balcony door. Of course. Petter said:

"Oh, how awful! I must have forgotten it."

"You mustn't forget that kind of thing. That'll be fifty crowns."

"Ah no, constable. How dreadful!"

He probably liked her face, and who doesn't? His voice got a bit milder, and he said:

"Well, well, shut the door anyway, ma'am, and look sharp."

"I will. Thanks so much," said Petter, running into the room.

The hall door shut again. Gingernuts took off his hat

and fanned himself with it, so that the ends of his moustache fluttered wildly. He said :

"These cops. They frighten a poor beggar out of his wits for no reason at all."

I went in and found my gun and Hahn's. It was a Stock 9.5, with a full magazine. I gave it to Petter.

"Use it if you have to," I said. "Now we must sink or swim."

We went into the corridor and along to the stairs. Not a soul. I thought : If only we were sitting in the car ! If only we were out of the house !

We went down the stairs, Gingernuts leading. Suddenly he stopped and lifted up his hand. I heard the tread of heavy boots up the stairs, and I recognized the sound.

"There's only one of them. Come on."

We went on and met him on the second floor.

He was quite a young fellow in the usual uniform of the Gestapo soldier, but he had neither rifle nor revolver, not even a bayonet in his belt. On his arm he had the little green sign that showed he was a police driver. He didn't look at us but went straight up. When he rounded the corner on the third floor he began to whistle "Erika."

"Quick now," said Gingernuts. "I think that was probably the chauffeur going up to see how Hahn's getting on."

We took the last flight in a couple of jumps, and were in the street. In front of the entrance stood Hahn's car. Empty. It was a snappy Mercedes Benz, and I thought that it could probably do seventy-five without so much as batting an eyelid. A bit farther away was Gingernuts' cab with Saunders in it, and it wasn't much to look at. I said :

"How about taking Hahn's ?"

Gingernuts clapped his hands.

"Of course," he said. "After all, he'll never need it again."

He ran over to the taxi, and shortly afterwards Saunders was at the wheel of the Mercedes, and we were huddling together in the back seat.

The car started with a roar that spoke of tremendous power, Saunders pressed the accelerator down as far as it would go, and we were off.

I like driving fast, but this pace was crazy. Saunders drove as really young men do drive before they've learnt the meaning of fear, and before they've discovered there's something called nerves. He got more miles out of that car than the

manufacturer had ever dreamt of, and I must admit he drove with supreme confidence. It looked as though he were enjoying himself, too. He sat comfortably leaning back in the well-upholstered front seat, and his hands hardly seemed to touch the wheel. His fair hair fluttered in the draught from the side window, and a contented boyish smile played round the corner of his mouth. I thought: This must be his hobby, and this may be just as good a way to die as any other.

Petter sat close beside me; she had stuck her hand under my arm. Her eyes were closed, and she looked happy. Gingernuts sat leaning forward a bit, busy with his pipe, and I thought I should protest pretty firmly the moment he tried to light it.

We were out of the town and driving northward, and I said:

"What way are we going to take?"

"I don't think it matters much," said Gingernuts. "The alarm will have been given everywhere, and the only thing we can bank on is our speed and the fact we're driving a German car."

"Let's drive via Svangberg," I said.

"O.K.," said Gingernuts, and I leant forward and gave Saunders a few instructions.

Then something struck me, and I said:

"A German car, admittedly. But a *stolen* one. That may not be so good."

"That's why we must hold the pace," said Gingernuts. "It'll always take a bit of time before they've got their posts warned."

We had already got into the belt of forest, and it grew pretty dark. Gingernuts said:

"Put more lights on. The more light we show the more German we'll look. To hell with everything, and get the most speed you can out of the old bus."

It was reckless but it was the right way, and I translated it for Saunders. It seemed to please him, for his smile grew broader and the engine began to roar like an aeroplane. The dark wood flew past us on either side, and we raced forward in a blaze of light. I began to enjoy myself. The anxiety from the afternoon was gone, and I didn't feel my shoulder much. There was a special almighty joy in being off, and I thought:

We'll fool them once again.

Half an hour went by, and nothing happened. We were

all three of us tense with excitement, and we sat staring in front of us without saying anything. We tore through three small built-up areas, and each time I thought that some one was going to try and stop us. But we were past in a single twinkling. I saw nothing but some blurred outlines of houses, then we were tearing on through the wood.

I wanted to sing. This was wonderful and it was easy, and there was no danger about it. It was quite simply unthinkable that any one would be able to stop us. I leant forward and patted Saunders on the shoulder.

"You drive like Ben-Hur himself."

He laughed and said :

"Thank you, sir."

Before I knew where I was we were in a street. We were driving through Abbestad. People were just coming out of the cinema after the last performance, and Saunders hooted. It was a vile horn, thoroughly German, brusque and intimidating, and the people shrank against the walls as we roared past. Then the town was far behind us, and we were in the forest again.

Without turning his head, Saunders said :

"Barrier in front, sir."

It wasn't possible to circumvent it. A red beam was lying right across half the road, and a German army car blocked the remaining gap. Saunders hooted again, and I liked him for that. A German helmet came up in front of the beam, and a hand was lifted. I saw the man quite plainly in the light from our car.

Saunders said :

"Nothing doing, sir." He slowed down, dimming the lights. We slowly approached the barrier, and I stuck my head out of the window and bellowed in my best German :

"What in the devil are you thinking of? I'm on duty! Get that car out of the way!"

Saunders stopped dead about fifty yards from the beam, and kept his finger solidly in the horn button. It was a nerve-racking solo, and several pretty nerve-racking seconds without that. I bellowed again, and nervousness made my voice almost maniacal :

"Quick! Quick! What about it?"

The soldier put out his torch and got off the road. The army car began moving, rolled back into the ditch, and left room.

Saunders put on all the light he had, and the car shot past. Petter and Gingernuts ducked down on the floor, and I hastily

put my railway cap on my head and sat at the window stiff as a genuine Prussian silhouette. We'd got at least a mile farther on when Gingernuts sighed and said :

" Another party like that and I'll die of heart attack."

I was wet under my shirt, and my hand was trembling so hard I could hardly light my cigarette, but I was in high feather. My nerves had held, and I felt quite proud about it. Now we should succeed. That had been the trial by fire. I looked at my watch. It was half-past twelve, and we'd been driving three hours.

Saunders turned off for the last time now, and we took the road due east. Towards the frontier and freedom. Without looking round he said :

" Could you spare a cigarette, sir ? "

I lit one and stuck it in his mouth. Then we drove on in silence. It was dark and I had no idea how much we'd been doing, and we had no map. I said :

" We ought to be near Spangelven now."

I'd driven there once or twice in the old days. The bridge over the river was narrow, and they might well have a barrier there. But sufficient unto the day . . .

I put my arm round Petter's neck and pressed her to me.

" You'll soon be in Sweden now," I said.

" Maybe," she said.

" Do you still love me ? "

" Yes, I love you."

" I've killed a man."

" I love you."

I let her go again and leant back in the seat. The reaction had begun to set in, and I was tired.

" Barrier again, sir," said Saunders.

His voice was just as usual.

Our lights fell on the barrier, and it was even worse than the last one. A huge long trestle of wood with dense barbed-wire criss-cross between the logs. On the right side of the road the fell wall rose quite perpendicular, and on the left the mountain went down practically sheer, and if we turned out here it would be the last thing we ever did in *this* world.

" Stop, Saunders," I said.

He slowed down and dimmed the lights. I leant out and yelled :

" I'm on important business ! Take away the barrier at once ! "

No answer. The barrier evidently didn't give a dam' for

us. Saunders stopped fifty yards from the wretched thing and hooted. I was just going to yell again when a bull's-eye lantern flashed on right in front of us. It came closer, and I realized there was a man behind it who was coming up to look a bit closer at us.

"Get out," I whispered.

Petter and Gingernuts slipped out through the left door, and I saw Saunders' sliding out of the driver's seat. For my part I squeezed myself into the right corner of the car and spoke out of the window:

"What the devil's the meaning of this? If you hold me up you'll suffer for it."

The man had got up to the right side of the car, and he politely turned the torch towards the ground before he spoke:

"Only a moment, sir. I've had orders. I must look at your papers."

Then he raised the torch, and the light fell full on my face. He took a step backwards and drew his revolver.

"Aussteigen!" (Get out!) he said.

I opened the door and got out, and he said:

"Hande hoch!" (Hands up!)

I thought: Good-night, every one, and put up my hands, and he called without turning his head:

"Schulte! Muller! Hierher!" Come here!

At the same moment I heard Saunders' calm voice from the darkness behind the car:

"Run for it, sir."

Then his tommy-gun went off right in my ear, and the man in front of me dropped the torch and toppled over backwards.

I ran round the car and saw Gingernuts and Petter racing down the slope to the left. I hurtled down after them, and at that moment I heard Saunders' pistol again. A long, rattling series, and I thought: Farewell, Schulte and Muller!

XXIX

DON'T ASK me how I got down that slope, for I don't know. I only know that I did it in record time, and that I got so confoundedly knocked about that I yelled aloud. I lost my balance almost at once, and that was probably the reason why I got down before Petter and Gingernuts, although they'd had the start of me. It was downhill all the time, and I had the impression that it was the bad shoulder that had to bear the brunt of all the knocks.

At last I fetched up against a tree, with a thousand stars dancing in front of my eyes. Gingernuts came slithering down beside me, holding Petter by the hand. It was as black as pitch down here, and the forest was dense on all sides. I hadn't the energy to get up, and I said:

"I'm all in. I can't go on."

Gingernuts pulled me on to my feet and shook me.

"Bilge. We can't stop now."

He pulled me after him through the trees and set off down towards the bottom of the valley. I heard Petter running behind us, and pulled myself together. At last I managed to blurt out:

"You can let go now. I'll be all right."

None of us said anything more. We had hardly enough breath left in our lungs to enable us to push on.

Far away and a bit below us I heard the roaring of a waterfall. I realized we were approaching the River Spang, and that it was the Great Fors we could hear. I knew it lay about five hundred yards beyond the bridge we had to cross. I'd often stopped the car on the bridge in the old days to look at the waterfall. It gave me a bit more courage to hear it again. We were on the right road, at any rate, and there couldn't be so everlastingly much left now.

I could hear nothing behind us. I wondered if Saunders had bumped them all off, and what had happened to him. And I thought that in any case the Germans wouldn't be too keen on making the same tour as we had down the slope in the darkness. We had got a start, and Gingernuts was right to make the most of it.

Time went round for me, and I've no idea how long we ran like that. My legs went mechanically and felt like lead, and when Gingernuts stopped at last I just fell down head first and lay face downwards in the cold undergrowth, groaning.

It was a long time before I finally rolled on to my back and sat up. I was breathing more or less normally again, and I could take a look at the others. We were sitting close together, but I could hardly see their faces in the darkness. Petter looked tired to death, but she gave me a faint smile and patted my hand. Gingernuts saw leaning against a tree, and that idiotic hat of his had ridden forward on to his forehead so he only had one eye visible, the right wing of the brown moustache had gone, and the other half hung down, in a very bad way, on the left of his nose.

"I must laugh, sick man though I be," I said. "You look too putrid."

"Laugh away," he said breathlessly. "It's said to be good for one."

"Where d'you think Saunders is?"

"Game little beggar," he said. "We shouldn't have been worth much without him."

I could hear the waterfall quite close now. We were evidently near the river.

"We must cross the bridge by night," I said. "It's hopeless in daylight."

Gingernuts got up.

"Yes, let's be getting on," he said. "They're bound to be after us by now."

Ten minutes later we were down by the river's edge. The river ran narrow and rapid below us and the roar from the waterfall was so strong that we couldn't hear anything. I looked at my watch. Half-past two.

Half an hour later we passed the waterfall. It was steep here, and heavy going, and it took a shamefully long time to drag ourselves along the last five hundred yards to the bridge.

Gingernuts said:

"Now we must mind our step. They're almost certain to have guards here. You lie here for a bit."

I was glad to be able to throw myself down again. Petter and I huddled together behind a large stone, and Gingernuts began crawling along towards the bridge like an Indian. An Indian in a black bowler hat and a coat he might have stolen from a sexton.

He was away for an eternity, and I'd already begun to have misgivings on his account when at last he came crawling down again and squeezed himself in beside me behind the stone. He was panting like a grampus, and the sweat poured off him.

"Hopeless," he said. "There are three guards on the bridge and it's impossible to crawl up to them."

"Can't we swim over?" said Petter.

"Don't be silly," said Gingernuts. "We might just as well jump right into the waterfall."

"What are we going to do, then?" I asked.

"Don't ask me," said Gingernuts. "This is where I say Pass, and go home to bed."

He put his hat over his eyes, lay down on his back with his hands clasped under his head, and said nothing more for a good long time. Then he took his hat away again and said:

"D'you know this part?"

"No, but I've driven past a couple of times."

"Are there any houses round about?"

"Not so much as a wood-shed. It's completely deserted here, and just beyond the bridge the frontier fells begin."

"Oh, that we were there!" carolled Gingernuts. Then he said more seriously: "It wasn't so frightfully cunning to choose this route."

He was right there, and I was ashamed that it had been my suggestion. I ought to have remembered that bridge. It was an important bridge, of course, and it was clear that they guarded it carefully. It must be a good target for a saboteur.

"Oh well," said Petter. "Let's get properly rested and not think about it any more just now. We can't do anything, after all."

"It's too putrid!" I said. "Only six miles to the frontier, and we are stuck here."

And there was no doubt that we *were* stuck. I leant against the stone, and Petter laid her head on my knee and shut her eyes. I sat looking at her, and thinking it was a pity it should end like this.

Time passed, and slowly it began to get light. A rather feeble grey gleam fell on the river, and I could glimpse it like a dull silver ribbon, and see the contours of the steep banks. It was five o'clock.

Soon I could see for several yards round about me, and it was plain we were in a confoundedly bad position. The forest was thin here, and there wasn't much to hide behind. And only a hundred yards away, behind the knob of rock, was the bridge with three German soldiers.

It wasn't particularly soothing to think what we had behind us, either. It was clear they were looking for us, and just as clear they'd find us when the sun rose, at latest, and it wasn't long till then, now.

Suddenly I heard something quite faintly through the roar of the waterfall.

"Gingernuts," I said, "hear that?"

He sat up and listened. Now we heard, plainly and much too close, the sound of a shot, and then a dog barking.

"There they are," said Gingernuts. "Blast them."

He took out his gun, released the safety catch, and crouched down behind the stone.

They were obviously to our right, a bit higher up the slope. We peered up into the half dark, but couldn't see anything.

There were no more shots, but the dog went on barking. Gingernuts said:

"I'll crawl up a bit and have a look-see."

He disappeared again, and I could see him lying flat up on the knob of rock, where he had a view down to the bridge.

Petter lay beside me, looking up the slope, and suddenly she cried :

“ Look ! ”

Saunders came out of the wood not a hundred yards above us. He ran limping and stumbling downwards, and now and then he waved his arms frantically.

And then I saw something that sent cold shivers down my back. After him came an Alsatian the size of a wolf ; it kept flying at him, and trying to knock him down and get hold of his throat. Time and again he beat it off as he ran. The dog wasn't barking any longer.

I took out my revolver, but the distance was far too great, and I could just as easily hit Saunders as the dog, if I hit at all.

He ran down towards the river and disappeared behind the knob of rock where Gingernuts was lying. I heard the dog barking again, and then came a shot, but this time from the bridge in front of us.

At the same time Gingernuts turned round and made a sign. Then he got hurriedly to his feet and rushed down the rock towards the bridge and disappeared.

Petter and I got up and ran on to the mound, and now I saw that we'd got a chance. Far down the river ran Saunders, with the dog at his heels. After him ran the three bridge guards. The way over the bridge was free.

Gingernuts was already on the bridge. He ran leaning forward and clumsily, but quickly, all the same, with his hat far down on his head. Petter ran like a boy, and was a good bit in front of me when we finally arrived. The planks of the bridge rang with the tramp of our ski-ing boots. I ran without looking round, following Gingernuts and Petter, who were now clambering quickly up the fell slope on the other side.

We got up on to a little plateau, and Gingernuts hurled himself headlong and lay gasping for breath. We threw ourselves down beside him on our bellies, and looked down at the river edge that we'd just left.

Saunders had got to the water now, and the dog was barking wildly at him. He turned towards it, and I was glad that the great distance made it difficult to see everything.

Saunders tore himself away just as the three soldiers came up to the river bank. Then he took a few staggering steps and threw himself into the water, and we saw him no more.

“ Poor lad,” said Gingernuts, taking off his hat and wiping his forehead.

"He rescued us for the second time," said Petter.

Just then Gingernuts sat up with a jerk and pointed. A car was arriving on the other side of the road down at the bridge. It stopped with its nose pointing straight at us, and wasn't more than three hundred yards away.

"Get a move on now," said Gingernuts. "Up on the fell!"

He began climbing upwards, and we followed. It didn't take many minutes for him to get up on the low mound and disappear from my sight. I was nearly up myself when a shot rang out and a bullet hit the rock just beside me. I redoubled my speed and crawled the last few yards with tears in my throat. Petter waited for me; she took me by the arm and helped me up, and then we ran in over the mound.

They were after us, but at any rate they couldn't use their car. We had a slight chance.

The frontier mountains are high at Svangberg. We ran over a heath, naked and wind-swept, with small patches of snow here and there. The terrain was a bit hillocky, but not enough to prevent us keeping up a good speed.

I heard a shot behind me, but didn't turn round. There were no more, and I understood that the distance must be too great and that they had to make a virtue of necessity and run a bit. But I didn't doubt they'd do it.

About the highest point of the mound we came to a little dip, and it was glorious to run down the slope and know we were under cover for the moment. The dip was too small for me to call it a valley, but there was at any rate a little stream at the bottom, with a couple of small, naked birches growing on the shore. Gingernuts threw himself down by the stream and dipped his head in the water a minute. Then he jumped up again and ran up the slope the other side.

Petter and I also lay down and lapped up a little water before running on.

Going up was worse. If they shot now, we'd be in a fine mess. We looked more like lice on a wall than anything else.

Just as Gingernuts got to the top a shot rang out. I saw him stagger and clutch his back; then he ran on. The next minute Petter and I were at the top too, and I ran as hard as I could towards the plateau.

Petter gave a shout behind me, and I stopped and turned.

I saw that I'd run past Gingernuts in my hurry. He'd fallen behind a large boulder, only a few yards from the little valley, and Petter was kneeling beside him.

When I came along he slowly pulled himself up so that he

sat with his back to the stone. He was pale, and his face was twisted with pain, but his eyes were open and calm, and he spoke low but clearly :

" They got me, laddie."

" Where ? "

Petter had opened his coat and loosened his belt. The bullet had gone right through him, and blood was gushing from the wound in the belly where it had come out.

She turned towards me and whispered :

" Quite hopeless."

Gingernuts said :

" All up with me, eh ? "

She bent over him, and said in a very low voice :

" I'm afraid so, Gingernuts."

" O.K.," he said. " It was good fun while it lasted. See that you get across now."

" Does it hurt ? " I said, and thought at once that it was an idiotic thing to say.

" Not so bad," he said. " I'm fairly all right, and I'll give those beggars something to think about while you get away. Look lively now."

I stood a bit undecided while Petter quickly tore her anorack in two pieces and bound them tightly over his belly.

" It's a bit damnable to leave you like this," I said.

" Bilge," he said. " Give us your gun, and then I'll have what I need. Now beat it. There they are already."

A shot rang out, and a bullet bounced against the stone we were lying behind.

I gave him the gun, and thought : Now you're leaving a friend again and letting him die.

Gingernuts turned round with a groan and crawled on to his knees. He looked cautiously out from behind the stone, lifted the heavy Mauser and fired. Then he gave a low laugh.

" Got him ! " he said. " Now they're lying down. If they think it's going to be so easy to come up and down in that dip, they'll find they're bloody well mistaken."

Petter said :

" Good-bye, Gingernuts. You're a real brick."

" Ta-ta," he said. He lay with his face pressed against the stone, with his gaze directed at the Germans over there on the other side of the dip.

We began crawling away. Fifty yards in front of us it looked as though the ground began sloping downwards again, and I hoped we'd find a little cover there. Gingernuts shouted :

" Iben ! "

I turned round and crawled back to him, and he said :
" Got any fags ? "

I gave him my case, and he laid it beside him behind the stone.

" Grand," he said. " Now let 'em come."

There was a lump in my throat, and the tears were streaming down my face.

" Good-bye, Gingernuts."

" Good-bye," he said. " Happy landing."

X X X

IT WAS EASY to run now. The path ran downwards, unbrokenly downward, and the mountain sloped evenly. There were no trees here—not a loose stone to hide behind if anything happened.

In front of us lay the forest, a dense black mass, and a little way into that mass was the beginning of Sweden.

I was so tired now that it didn't seem to hurt any more. My legs felt as though they'd withered under me, but they held me up and moved without my feeling I had anything to do with it. I felt nothing, and had no pain, and I was remarkably light-headed. The only thing I had to be careful not to do was to stumble. I didn't look for Petter—only knew she was running along beside me.

It was quite quiet behind us, and I knew what was going on back there at the edge of the dip as well as if I'd been standing there looking on. I knew the Germans. Now they'd be distributing themselves carefully along the line of fire and taking care not to stick their heads up too high. And then they'd begin spreading to right and left to come round and take Gingernuts in the flank.

A shot rang out. A short, dry bang, and I knew it was Gingernuts' Mauser. A short series from a tommy-gun immediately replied ; then all was quiet again. It was strange how clearly the shots could be heard ; it was because we'd got the wind behind us.

I knew that they'd tried an advance, and he'd been on his guard.

I ran on listening for more, but there was silence for some minutes. Then the Mauser again. Four times, at regular intervals. I realized he was still on top and giving himself time to aim properly. There was no answer from the tommy-guns this time. Yes, there was, though. One shot, but it was different. A rifle.

This couldn't last very long, and it was a good way to the wood yet. We'd got a start, but it was clear we weren't being quick enough, though I was running so hard I felt my lungs must soon burst within me.

"Can you run faster?" I panted.

She was right beside me, and turned her face towards me. It was drawn with weariness, and her breath came shortly between her open lips. She shook her head.

"I've no strength for any more."

But she had strength, all the same.

A revolver shot rang out again. And then three more with no intervals. I knew what that meant. The Germans had made a bold advance, and Gingernuts had emptied his Mauser at them without taking proper aim. There came a long crackling series from the tommy-gun, and it was clear what was happening. Covering fire. While the chap with the tommy-gun forced Gingernuts to keep behind the stone, the others would run over the dip on the flanks and surround him.

Now the rifle came into play. Many shots with short intervals. They'd lain down and were shooting at him from the sides. It couldn't go on much longer.

I forced myself to run faster while I looked towards the wood. A long way yet, at least a mile. And on the open slope they could pot at us at long range like coconuts at a fair.

"Quicker!" I shouted.

Her hair fluttered wild and fair in the blast, and even in this mazed moment I couldn't help thinking: How beautiful she is.

The revolver again. Many shots. There wasn't much of any other kind of sound now, and I realized he was shooting with my Walther. His own was empty, and they hadn't given him time to reload.

It was clear what was happening. They were pressing on. It couldn't be long now.

And then I heard the hand grenade explode, and knew that everything was over.

"Run!" I said. "We've got to get into the wood!"

There were still five hundred yards to go when the first shot rang out. A bullet hit the mountain far to my right. I ran on. Another shot. A bullet whined straight past me and entered the fell ten yards in front of me. I called out:

"Flat on your face!"

We lay pressing ourselves against the bare mountain, panting for breath. I twisted about and looked round. Far behind us on the slope I caught sight of four—no, six figures. There were no shots, but I saw they were beginning to run down towards us.

"Up again and run!" I screamed.

We were running for dear life now. The seconds passed. I expected every moment to hear shots again. Now . . . now they were going to stop and kneel, and aim at us again. Now . . . ! There it went. Shot after shot. The bullets whistled round us and ricocheted against the mountain side about us with a hideous singing sound.

Petter had got in between the trees now. I spurted as hard as I could, and came up to the wood and dropped. I was all in. It was no good.

Petter was standing behind a tree, panting for breath and looking up the fell.

"Come on," she said. "They've started to run again."

"I can't," I groaned. "I can't. *You* run."

"You've *got* to," she said.

I struggled up again, reeling like a drunkard.

We ran on. I concentrated all the strength I had left on keeping clear of the trees. Our progress was not rapid.

Five minutes later I heard them crashing about in the copse behind us. Boughs snapped, and they were shouting to one another.

I sobbed with weariness and fear.

Another shot. But in front of us! Right in front of us!

Petter stopped and sank groaning behind a tree-trunk. I threw myself down beside her.

"Did it hit you?"

"No," she panted. "But look there."

She drew Hahn's gun out of her trouser pocket.

I looked. In front of us, only fifty yards away, were four soldiers in steel helmets and rifles at the ready, coming forward between the trees. I said:

"Give me that."

I got up, took the gun by the barrel, and threw it as far as I could into the wood.

She looked at me, frightened and desperate.

"What are you doing?"

I said:

"They're Swedes."

Then my legs seemed to melt under me. I didn't notice that I fell.

When I woke up I looked straight into the face of a young man in a white coat. He had horn-rimmed spectacles and a gap between his front teeth, and he said :

"We'll have to operate on you."

He spoke a strange language, and I remember thinking it was German. All I wanted to do was to sleep.

"We must remove that arm of yours," he said.

"Otherwise . . ."

"Otherwise?" I whispered.

"Otherwise you'll die, my friend."

I don't think I answered anything to that; at any rate I don't remember doing so.

Centuries later I woke up again and opened my eyes. That hurt, and I wanted to shut them again, but I didn't seem able to. I turned my head to the left and felt a terrific pain in my temples. If all the hangovers of my life ever collected together for a party, I imagine they would achieve something of the kind. I saw I was lying in a bed and that I had a kind of bird-cage made of steel wire round my shoulder. And the cage was empty. My arm was gone.

I was furious. I thought they'd got me, and that now the swine had gone and cut my arm off.

The young man with the horn-rimmed spectacles was standing there looking at me. He said, in the same strange language :

"How d'you feel, laddie?"

Of course! He was a Swede! I remembered everything. I screamed aloud :

"Petter!"

I know that I screamed aloud, but not a sound came from my mouth. But all the same, there she was standing there leaning over me, and I saw how frightened she'd been, and how tired she was, and how happy she was. I lay there a while looking at her, and when I spoke I thought it took an eternity before I was able to get the words out.

"Can you see yourself marrying a man who's only got one arm?" I said.

She fell on her knees by the bed, and a tear hit me on the nose as she kissed me.

"You'll always have mine," she said.

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